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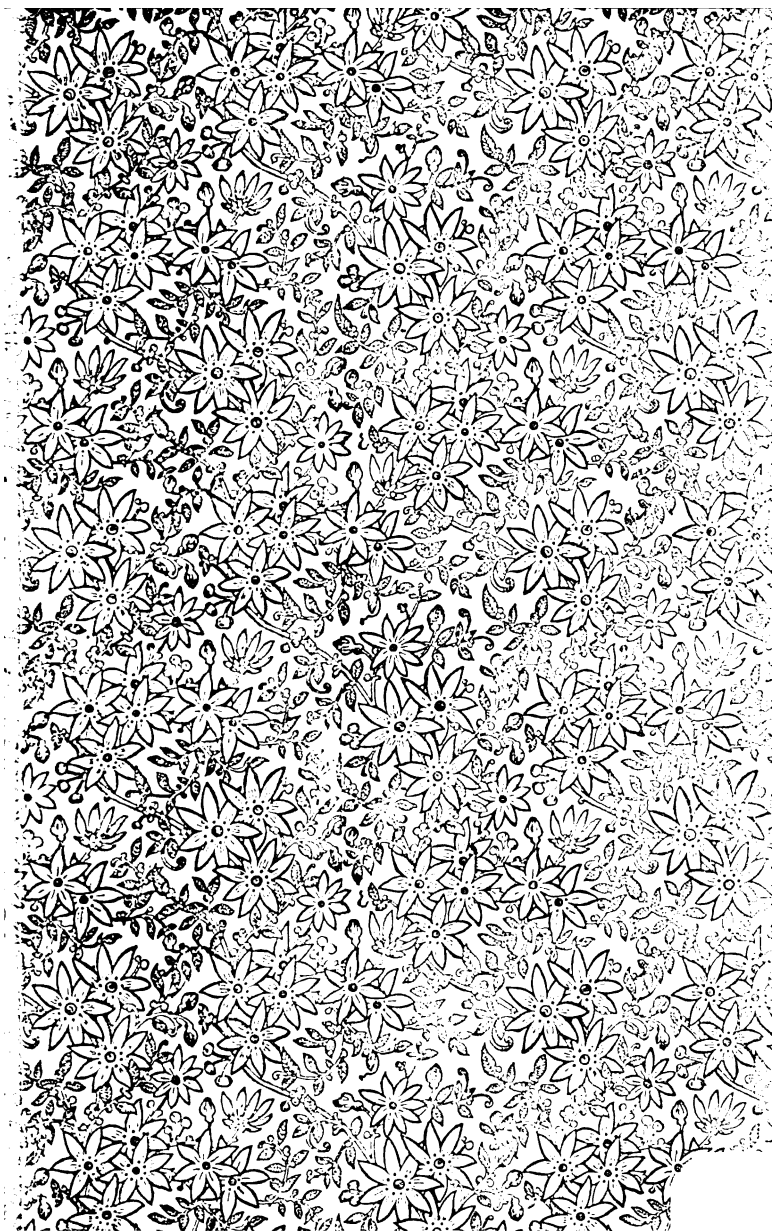
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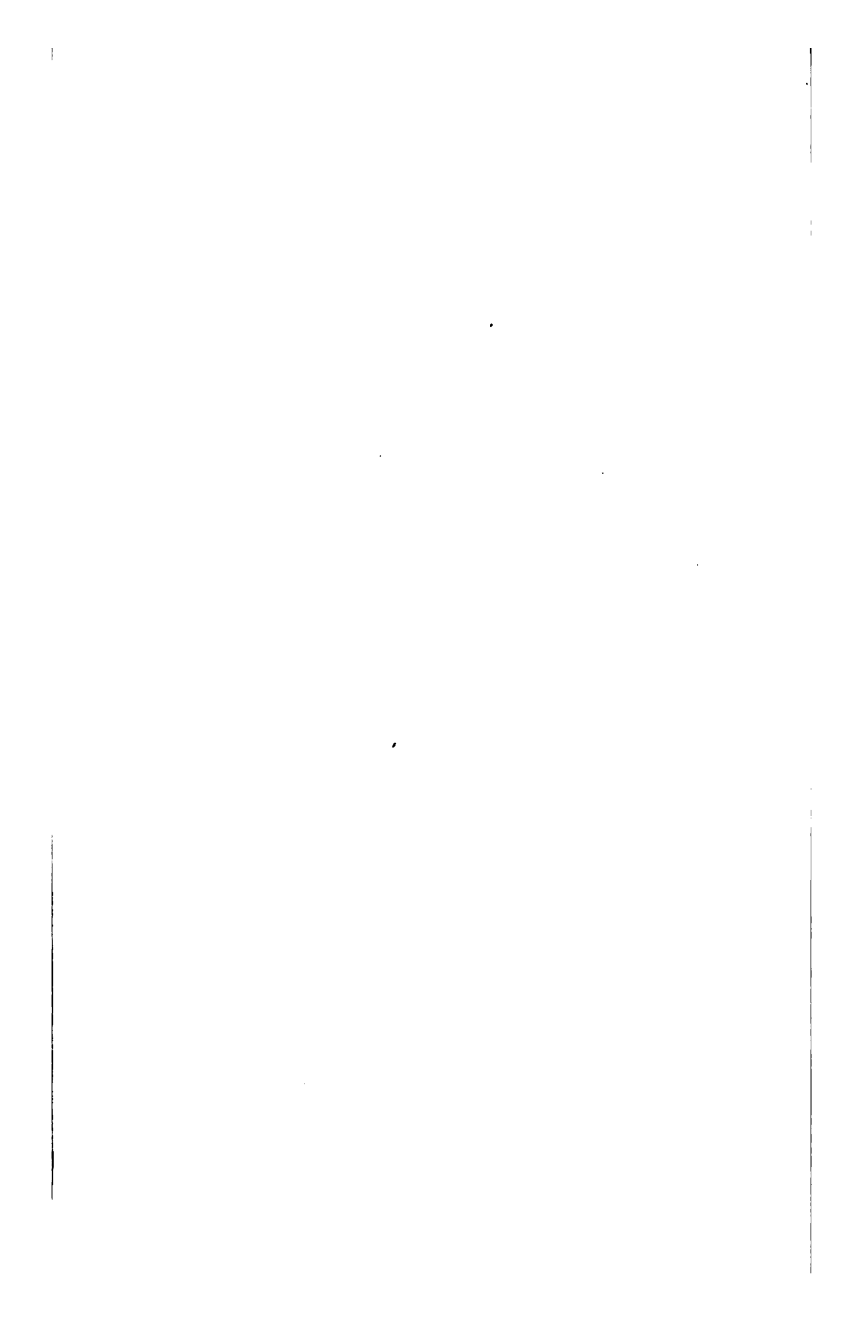
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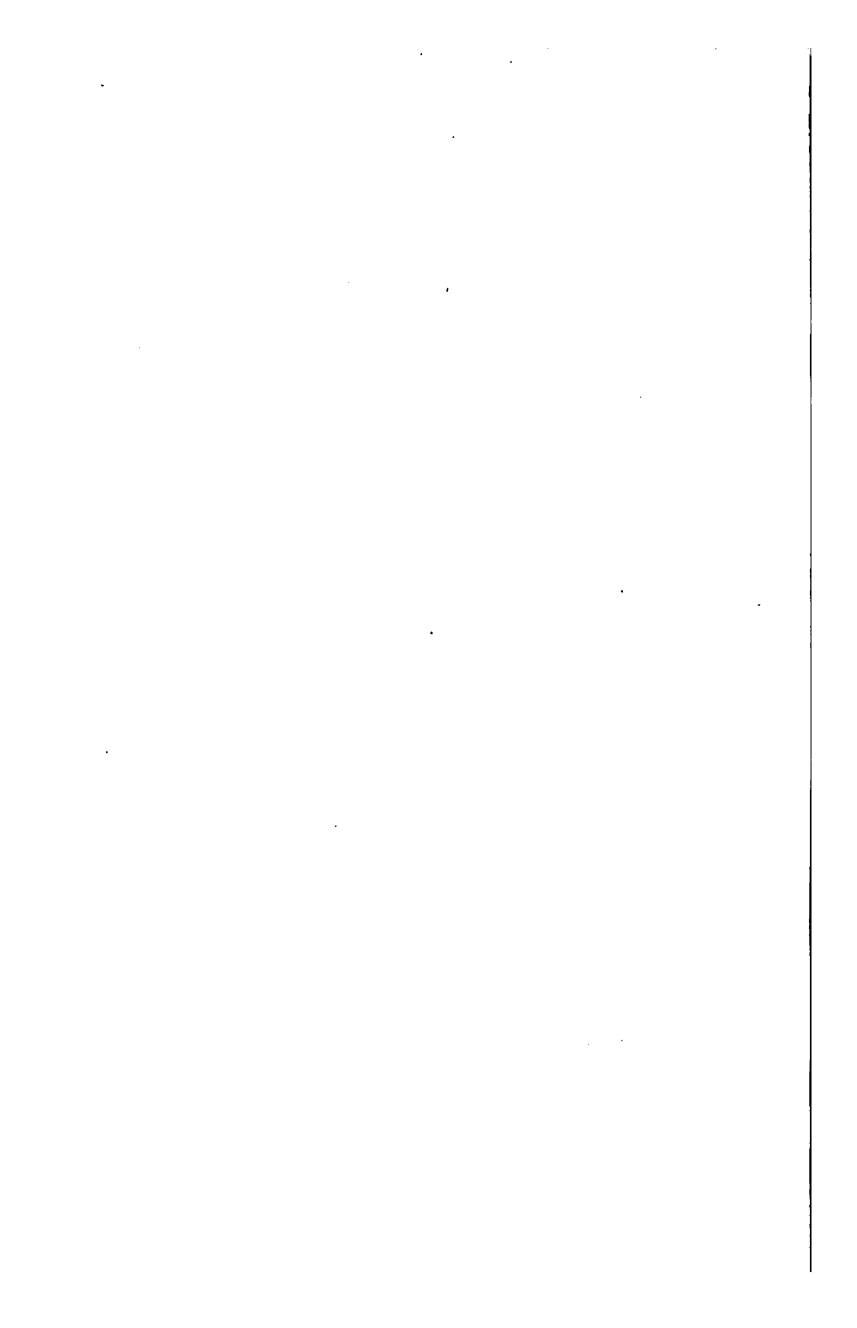




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CHARITY.



Charity.

FIFTEEN PLAIN ADDRESSES.

BY THE LATE

from the records of
J. B. WILKINSON, M.A.,

VICAR OF THE CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION, LAVENDER HILL.
AUTHOR OF "MISSION SERMONS," "DAILY READINGS," ETC., ETC.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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HONORARY CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD,
AND WARDEN OF THE HOUSE OF MERCY, CLEWER.

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AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
TO THE CONGREGATION
OF THE
CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION, LAVENDER HILL.

Preface.

THERE can hardly need a justification for the publication of this volume of Sermons. The crowds that gathered at the Church of the Ascension to mourn the sudden loss of one so beloved, to whom, under God, was due the foundation and building up of that important centre of Church life, whose teaching and laborious ministry had been so deeply valued, and the friends from a distance who were able to be present, representing the wider circle by whom his labours at other important centres had been long known and highly esteemed, was an unmistakeable testimony to the desire that must have been widely felt, that his special gifts of teaching might not be wholly lost—that the intense earnestness which characterized his ministry might yet speak. He had long been known as an author, and his publications valued far and wide. For he had a happy power of uttering deep truths with a peculiar simplicity. One who constantly heard him, says, "The charm of his preaching was its simplicity." It was no doubt that which made him, as the same witness observes, "such a favourite with children, for whom he had a great love;" and, as he adds, "he always enjoyed catechising children, which was a great point with him."

At the same time, his reading was extensive and varied, and the fruits of study are manifest in his writings, though without any display of learning, but felt as an undercurrent, giving breadth and strength to his full, earnest, and clear utterances. He himself truly expressed the character of his teaching, when he said in his preface to his work on our Lord's

Parables, that "the one point I have endeavoured to set before myself, has been the edification of those to whom I have the responsibility of ministering. To avoid, as far as is possible, all controversy, in order to make the teaching devout, practical, and simple, has been my honest aim."

From a long personal knowledge of the Author, and having followed his course at different centres where he has been called to work, I can truly say, that among the many engaged in the pastoral ministry known to me, there is no one of whom I can more truly say, that his heart was in his work and with his people, and it was this which gave him such influence with all classes in accomplishing the great work which he brought so near to completion at Lavender Hill.

There are passages in these Sermons which will touch many hearts, as shewing how he seemed to live in the thought of death, while ceaselessly at work in the many objects of his unwearied care among which he lived; and though called to his account with a remarkable suddenness, without any apparent sign of the approaching end of his ministry, it was felt as a token of love "strong as death," that when ministering in his church on the Thursday on which he passed to his rest, he was moved to ask for special prayer "that the blessing of Jesus Christ might rest on the Church and Work."

This volume will therefore, I trust, be heartily welcomed. The Series has been selected as one which the Author had intended for publication, though left in MS. unrevised and uncorrected. It is a course of addresses delivered on Sundays in Lent, in S. Paul's, Knightsbridge, in 1872, when many spoke of being much impressed by his words; and afterwards, on the same days, they were preached at the Church of the Ascension. He would probably have re-written many passages had he lived to carry out his intention of publishing the volume. The Editor, to whose reverent and loving hand it has naturally fallen to

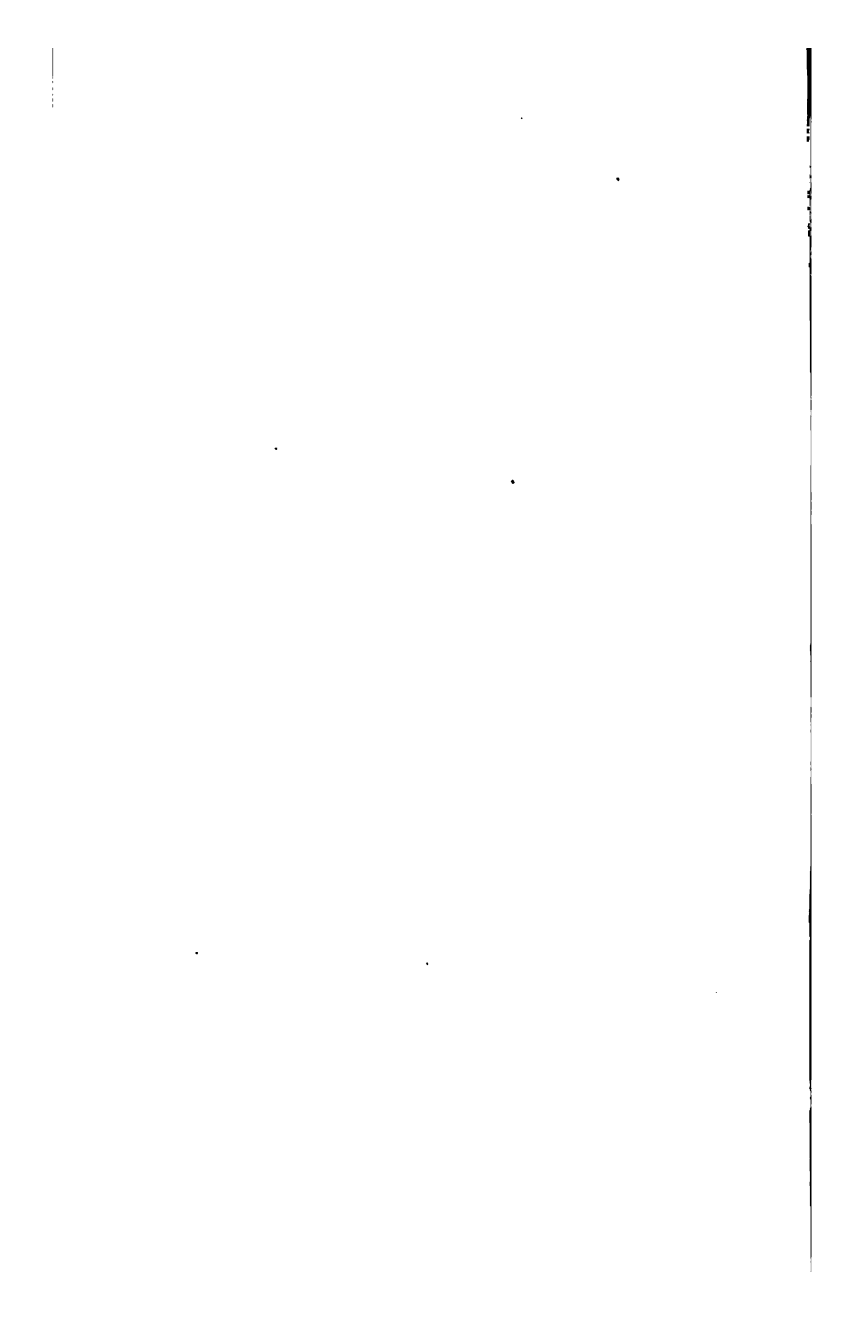
prepare the book for the press, has felt it a sacred duty to leave the Sermons as they were found, only allowing himself to correct purely clerical errors.

It is a sincere gratification to myself to be able to add my brief testimony to the worth of one with whom I have felt myself in constant sympathy, and the blessing attending whose labours has always been to me a cause of rejoicing.

This work will, I trust, add to the admiration in which the Author has been held by all who knew him, and who have benefitted by his many labours.

T. T. CARTER.

S. John's Lodge, Clewer,
Oct. 16, 1885.



THE Editor suggests that the passages of Holy Scripture, which are noted in the index, should be read at the close of each Sermon.

In many cases the passages are those which the Author read as First and Second Lesson for the evening services, when the Sermons were delivered.

May God grant that the meditations may be useful and helpful to those to whom the Author ministered, and to many others.

October, 1885.

B. W.

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Charity.

SERMON I.

Charity.

I COR. XIII. 13.

"The greatest of these is Charity."

THERE are regions of thought, my brethren, to which this text of ours, or indeed one word of it, or rather this whole chapter, takes us whither I cannot and dare not lead you. Partly, first, because I humbly confess I do not know the way, and secondly, because, ordinarily speaking, it would appear unreal and unsuitable. Partly because the world has put its interpretation, and stamped its own construction upon the very phrases and words of Holy Scripture, and especially upon this word Charity, and it is hard to rescue these words, and, above all, this one word, and bring them and it back to the true, real, legitimate and technical meaning: for as to what is not, or what is Charity, who shall say?

But this last difficulty ought not to deter us. On the contrary, *because* the world has so confused and obscured the Word of God, so much the greater reason is there,

that we, who are members of Christ, and children of the Church, and therefore *not* of the world, are bound to endeavour to win back for God that of which the world has been suffered, for our sins, to defraud both us—and indeed Him.

Now, consider this word “Charity” in its *ordinary* acceptation, and see what for the most part is commonly meant by it. “Charity” we take to mean, as a rule, the giving of money to the poor. And we know that, in many minds, this has come so exclusively to be its meaning, that it almost seems to admit of no other. The word Charity, I say, conveys to many people’s minds no other idea but that of mere almsgiving.

But surely the careful reading through, or hearing of this thirteenth chapter of S. Paul’s Epistle to the Corinthians, which is the Epistle for this Quinquagesima Sunday, and which the text sums up in a sentence, is sufficient to give us a clearer, and a higher, and a deeper, and a broader, and, therefore, a truer view of Charity.

Let us take the first part of this chapter and look into it. We have the negative and the positive illustration of Charity. The first part is chiefly occupied with descriptions of what Charity is *not*: the second, with what Charity *is*.

We will confine ourselves for the present to the first.

Fair speaking and mere words, and fine speaking and fluent speaking, speaking only with “the tongues,” either

"of men" or "of angels," evidently is not "Charity;" for the Epistle says, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." "I am become," that is, a mere hollow empty sound, a voice, and nought else besides: pleasant to the ear, it may be, but unfruitful, unprofitable, leaving no memory behind, beyond, as it were, that of a "guest that tarrieth but a day." Moving enough, and soothing enough it may be at the time, but productive of no real tangible results. A mere tongue of the outward mouth, a kind of lip service, which is no "Charity" before God, or love for God, for the sound of the lips *alone* makes no music in His ear, unless the heart goes with it, as it is written, "My HEART talketh of Thee."

Neither is the power of eloquence in preaching, nor even the foretelling of the future, the speaking as the "oracles of God," nor that which may be common to priest and layman alike, that is, accurate knowledge of theology as a science, or power to discriminate or know the line of demarcation between orthodoxy and heterodoxy: between the truth and heresy, or between unity and schism; neither are these, or any one of these, necessarily allied to the grace of Charity?

Neither is faith of itself, powerful as it may be to believe all, or even to hope all, able without Charity to endure all. And so without this Charity even faith is not faith. Faith may be strong enough to

endeavour to remove mountains and conquer super-human obstacles, and yet be unable to remove that one little tiny speck of uncharitableness, unlovingness, which rests upon the heart, and mars its action, and separates it from Charity. "Though I have the gift of prophecy," the Apostle says, "and understand all mysteries, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not Charity, I am nothing."

Or again, we may be profound scholars, or we may be learned divines, or far-seeing men of science, or shrewd men of the world, and yet without this most excellent, and all-excelling, and *essential* gift of Charity, all our knowledge and science, whether of religion, or of art, or of politics, all is absolutely reduced to a mere cipher, a zero, a naught. Without Charity we are nothing, and we have nothing.

But let us go further, and now, even according to our own ordinary acceptance of it, this strange word seems to contradict itself. Charity need not necessarily be Charity. We may give in Charity untold sums, and yet be wanting in Charity. Nay, we may give more. We may be led out of insufficient or wrong motives; or it may be through mere eccentricity, or through that sweet love of praise, which is so dear to us, which most of us so dearly prize, which so many of us are tempted to put away virtuously with one hand in front and in sight, and to receive surreptitiously and secretly in the other hand

held behind our back ; or we may be led away through that especial attraction of being looked up to and respected ; or we may take to asceticism, or, through enthusiasm more or less lasting, make all kinds of sacrifices of bodily comforts, or of our time, or of our means, or of our affections, or of our relations. In other words, we may “bestow all” our “goods to feed the poor,” and give “our body to be burned,” and yet we are nothing, absolutely nothing, profited thereby without Charity.

We may build hospitals, and endow Churches, and establish schools, and set up numberless philanthropic institutions, and yet, if we are without Charity, we should not be one whit nearer Heaven, that is, if we are without Charity in its technical and its only true meaning. In a word, the very flames to which we give our bodies to be burned by a spurious martyrdom may be without the flames of that fire of love of God ; and all things which is Charity.

All gifts, all graces, all talents, natural or acquired, are ungraceful, or wanting in that one essential, which is the complement or the supplement of them all, without this Charity. Take it as of a circle, and it is wanting in that which makes it round. The lines from its centre do not go straight to its circumference. They are disproportioned : they are not equi-distant. Take it as of a building, and there is want of symmetry. The

thing is deformed. It may have due length, but not due breadth. It may have breadth and length, but no depth. It may be, have due breadth, but not due height. It may have all these, but have no foundation. Such is any or every work without Charity.

Well, then, let the Apostle himself tell us where we are to find this Charity, and what it is. Nay, let the Holy Spirit of God Himself be His own interpreter, speaking by the mouth of the Apostle. Two passages alone sum it all up. In this very same Epistle to the Corinthians S. Paul gives this basis of all. "Other foundation," he says, "can no man lay than that laid, which is Jesus Christ." And again, to the Ephesians, "That ye," he says, "being rooted and grounded in love," that is, in Charity, "may be able to comprehend with all Saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love, or the Charity, of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Does not Quinquagesima Sunday come well on the threshold of Lent? If we could but make a good meditation upon, and a good resolution upon each one of the positive marks of Charity, which S. Paul gives us in this Epistle, and then act upon it, we should be keeping Lent indeed, not only in the letter, but in the spirit.

True it is that almsgiving: the giving of our goods to feed the poor, and fasting: the giving of our body to hunger, through self-denial, are binding duties upon us,

as far as circumstances enable us to perform them, binding upon us as Church people, and binding upon us as Scriptural duties, binding upon us as Christians ; but equally true it is also, that without Charity, that love of Christ, constraining all our thoughts, and words, and actions, we are, and shall be, nothing. Neither fasting nor almsgiving will make it a true Lent. We have not, and shall not have, one claim, even through our Lord's merits, upon God.

I have dwelt thus briefly upon the negative description S. Paul gives of Charity, reserving the details of the positive in order to enter into them more at length and in their order.

But there is quite enough, even as far as we have got, for a life's work, much less a Lent work, to put our thoughts into practice. We may look upon these negative marks of Charity in the Epistle as *correctives* to our Lenten duties. But they are also inventions. We must cease to do evil before we learn to do well. We must clear the ground, as it were, with plough and harrow, before we sow with repentance and contrition, with confession and firm purpose of amendment, before the good works of Lent, be they fasting or almsgiving, or even more frequent attendance at Church and Communion, will be really good to us, or good for us, or be blessed of God. All these are good and excellent things ; " but we must covet earnestly," the Apostle says at the end of the last chapter,

not the good only, but "the best gifts, and yet show I unto you," he adds, not only an excellent, but a "more excellent way." That is the way of Charity, which way he at once proceeds to point out.

All are good, and excellent, and great, but most excellent and best, or in the words of the text, and the last words of this chapter, "The greatest of these is Charity."

These other duties ought we indeed to do: but not leave this one great duty undone, or else the want of it undoes the doing of the others. It cancels and nullifies them. It turns virtues into sins, and graces into sins, or at least this want of Charity makes them of no avail, negatives them, makes them and us nothing, and worse than nothing, the worse because we appear something.

God is Love. God is Charity. God is good. Take away, then, subtract that principle from our thoughts, or our words, or our actions, and positive good not only becomes negative, but positive EVIL: for it follows that if we are without Charity, we are without God.

May God give us all more love for Him; more love and kindness and forbearance to each other; more absolute sinking into oblivion of all thoughts of bitterness against any living or dead, that so our hearts being indeed rooted and grounded and founded on the love of Christ, we may build upon this Foundation such graces as He may please to bestow upon us in this coming Lent, and throughout our lives. Amen.

SERMON II.

Impatience.

I COR. XIII. 4.

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind.”

THESE two great graces of long-suffering and of kindness, which spring from the parent grace of Charity or Love, are more than once mentioned together. S. Paul, for instance, when writing to these same Corinthians in his second Epistle, of the way in which the Ministers of God should “in all things approve themselves,” says, amongst these things that they should so “approve themselves by long-suffering” and by “kindness.” And again, when he is enumerating to the Galatians the fruits of the Spirit, or, as we commonly call them, the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost, he enumerates among them, and places together these same two graces (implied in our text) of “long-suffering” and “gentleness” as one.

These, then, are the two graces or virtues upon which we will, God willing, dwell this evening. They are two of the chiefest, and as they stand, the first in that brilliant, beautiful, loving catalogue which S. Paul gives us in the

chapter of Charity or Psalm of Love, this thirteenth chapter of S. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians.

But first, I think it might be as well to take the chapter as a whole, and consider it briefly with regard to the circumstances under which it was written, and with regard to the persons to whom it is addressed. Two reasons are sufficient to give to include all. I will not, lest it should be wearisome to you, go into all the details. It is sufficient to say that Pride and Schism were the special sins into which many of the members of the Corinthian Church had fallen. Pride, both the pride of intellect and the pride of life, were the specially besetting sins of the Corinthians as a people, and they carried too much of it into their religion when they became Christians, and it resulted, through a false liberality, in schism, or a spirit of faction and opposition. They worshipped intellect, and refinement, and eloquence, and carried this into their religion, to personal following of individual preachers and teachers of Christianity. They added to this, or rather this was the outcome or result of, a graver fault, namely, a spurious liberality; a taking an easy-going lax view, not only of religion, but even of questions of morality, and naturally enough they applied this to individuals.

A terrible sin had been committed in the Corinthian Church. It is needless to say more than this, that it was a sin which drew down upon its author the heaviest sentence of the Church, viz., that of excommunication,

immediately ; and S. Paul being absent, a faction seems to have been formed. Some of the members of it appear to call S. Paul's authority in question, while others advocate the cause of the criminal on the ground of *Charity*, and they seem also in defence of their position to have gone quite off on irrelevant issues. Now the whole scope of this chapter is not only a description of true Charity, but also a distinguishing between true Charity and false Charity. Some of these characteristics of true Charity refer more *directly* and unmistakeably to the subject and occasion of the whole Epistle, but *all* do so more or less indirectly. In his very defence, S. Paul seems to retaliate upon his false accusers, and reproves them for not understanding what really are the marks of a true Charity, because in true Charity this love is not only a matter of feeling, but a matter of principle, and because true Charity is the love of God for man, of man for God, and of man for man for God's sake.

S. Paul removes the whole sphere of the argument from the natural to the supernatural. He commences here, in this catalogue of the graces of Charity, as we see with two of the fruits of the Holy Ghost, and gives us foremost in this catalogue, as the first fruits of the Spirit of Love, "long-suffering and kindness." "Charity suffereth long, and is kind." Now "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variableness, neither shadow

of turning." So the first (and indeed the *two* first) of these fruits of Charity seem not only to come from, but to be, as it were, a part of God Himself, and to form some of those which are *specially* called His attributes. Let us apply this, and see how true it is : we have only to think of it to see it at once—God is essentially "long-suffering," and God is "kind." The Lord, so says David, is "gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and of great goodness;" "The Lord is loving unto every man : His mercy is over all His works." God is Love. God is Charity, and therefore God must needs be *long-suffering*. But this word, which we take as long-suffering, may be taken in the same sense and as being the same as "PATIENT." God is Love. God is Charity, and, therefore, God is *patient*. "God," says David again, "is a righteous Judge, strong and *patient*, and God is provoked every day." What was it but the loving long-suffering and patience of God which called Adam to account, and gave him an opportunity of explanation instead of punishing him instantly. What was it, as S. Peter says, but the "long-suffering and patience of God" which "waited in the days of Noah, while the Ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water." How long He waited to let Abraham plead for the cities of the plain, let him, as it were, reduce his plea, until He said He would save them if there were but five righteous to be found in them. Surely God, Who is Love, and God, Who

is just, has rightly proclaimed His Name when He calls Himself "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, *long-suffering* and abundant in goodness and truth, and yet that will by no means clear the guilty." By no means, because God is not only Charity and Love, but true Charity.

So is it with God dwelling amongst men in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. To save the world was the one longing desire of the heart of Jesus. And yet see how *patiently* He waited for it until the appointed time came. Nay, in those wonderful words of Tertullian, which I wish I had time to quote at full length, "God suffereth Himself," he says, "to be conceived in the womb of a mother, and abideth the time: and being born, *waiteth* to grow up: and being grown up, is not eager to be acknowledged, but putteth a further slight upon Himself, and is baptized by His own servant, and repelleth the attacks of the tempter by words only. When from the the Lord He became the Master, teaching man to escape death, having well learned, for salvation's sake, the forgiving spirit of offended *patience*: He strove not: He cried not: the shattered reed He did not break, the smoking flax He did not quench—God did put His own Spirit in His Son with perfection of patience. None that desired to cleave to Him did He not receive: no man's table or house did He despise. Yea, Himself ministered to the washing of His Disciples' feet (even of him who

betrayed Him). He scorned not the sinners nor the publicans. He was not angry with that city which would not receive Him. He healed the unthankful. He gave place to those who laid snares for Him. He, at Whose side, if He had desired it, legions of angels from Heaven would at one word have been present, approved not the avenging sword of even a single Disciple. In Malchus the patience of the Lord was wounded. Wherefore also He cursed the works of the sword for ever after, and by the restoration of soundness to him whom He had not Himself hurt, He made satisfaction through Patience, the mother of Mercy and Charity: the Lord Jesus is long-suffering and kind: is patient and gentle." Again Tertullian adds, "I pass in silence the Crucifixion, for it was for that that He came in the world: yet, was there *need* of insult, alas! that He might undergo death? But being about to leave the world, He desired to be filled to the full with the pleasure of *patience*. He is spit upon, is beaten, is mocked, is foully clothed, and still more foully crowned. Wondrous constancy in long-suffering and patience!" This is how the long-suffering, and patience, and gentleness, and, as S. Paul says, "kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by work of righteousness, which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us."

What a fearful contrast we have in the sins opposite to these virtues: the sins opposed to these graces and gifts

of Charity, these fruits of the Holy Spirit of Love ; I mean the sins of impatience, unkindness, or want of gentleness.

It is no exaggeration to say that an unloving impatience of control was the cause of the fall of the great Archangel, and his transformation into the chief of the evil spirits. Impatience made an Archangel become the Devil or Satan himself. "It is in the Devil himself," says the author I have just quoted, "that I discover the birth of impatience, at that moment when he did not hear that the Lord God should put all the works which He had made in subjection to *His own* Image, that is, to man." It was impatience of the want of knowledge, that it was not intended for her, and it was not good for her to have, that caused the fall of Eve. It was impatience of curiosity. It was impatience of silence which caused her to hasten to Adam, and impart to him the knowledge she had acquired in so guilty a manner. What was the cause of the first murder, that of Abel by Cain, but impatience at the rejection of his offerings by God, and unkindness, or ungentleness, resulting in anger towards his brother? It was impatience which led the Children of Israel into the sin of Idolatry, because they would not wait the return of Moses from the Mount. It was impatience which led Saul into the sin of sacrilege, because he could not *wait* for the coming of Samuel. And indeed all evil is the impatience of good. When once we accept it as a fact that all that God sends must needs be good, then only

we understand why it is wrong to rebel, and be impatient or murmuring: for instance, at poverty, or sickness, or unkindness, or reproof, or being slighted by others, and then only we learn to be long-suffering, and patient, and kind, and gentle towards others.

Away with such defilement from the servant of Christ as impatience and unkindness. Well says our great author again, "If any shall try to provoke thee by open violence, the admonition of the Lord is at hand." "To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, turn the other also." Let his wickedness be wearied by thy patience and gentleness. Be the blow what it may against thy body, or against thy soul, bear it, and forbear. Thou beatest that wicked man the more by bearing with him, for he shall be beaten by Him, for Whose sake thou bearest with him. But either way bear with him, for "Charity suffereth long and is kind."

Again, if we would win a soul for Christ, we must be long-suffering, patient, gentle, and kind. We must be as the husbandman, who waiteth long for the precious fruit of the earth, if we would win that far more precious fruit for Christ. We must sow the seed of good example, and earnest prayer, and holy teaching, and suffer long, and patiently wait, until it come up, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. It must be so with our children, so with our friends, so with our enemies, or those that oppose themselves: so with our-

selves even. We must be especially on our guard at all times, but more especially at such seasons as Lent, or any other time of protracted devotion. As we are making progress in the spiritual life, so may we be, and probably shall be, more liable to temptation, to irritation, or sharpness, or disinclination to hear with others. Often it is because we are so anxious about them. We cannot understand why obstructions are put in our way, whether by those we fain would win, or by others, and we are apt to grow impatient and ungentle.

One loving look at the Cross ought to help us much to put matters straight, and from that look should go an arrow into our hearts, as that look is returned ; and we feel, with the impetuous, impatient Apostle, that nothing remains for us but to go out from our old selves, and pour out our hearts in confession, and lay those sins at the Feet of the Crucified, and learn from Him what is meant by our text, " Charity suffereth long and is kind." It is only in the light of the Cross we shall ever learn what true Charity, the Love of God, is, how great God's love for us, how great should be our love for God ; how great, and true, and real should be our love, our Charity, our long-suffering, our kindness, our gentleness for each other.

SERMON III.

Envy.

1 COR. XIII. 4.

“Charity envieth not.”

THERE is something especially hateful about the sin of envy. It is a deadly sin. It is one of the seven deadly or mortal sins. We at once are ready to admit this, and to acknowledge it to ourselves. And yet of all the deadly sins, there is not a sin perhaps which, in some one or another of its forms, is more common or universal. S. Paul, in writing to the Romans, places it next to murder. He speaks of some as being full of envy, murder, &c. It is classed by him amongst the works of the flesh, and is placed next to some of the worst of them. “The works of the flesh,” he says, writing to the Galatians, “are manifested ; which are these . . . *envyings*, murders, drunkenness, revelling, and such like : of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.” It is opposed by the same S. Paul in the same chapter to the works of the Spirit, the first of which

he says is "Love," which is just the reverse of *envy*, and he closes that same chapter with an exhortation in which he repeats his caution and warning against this deadly sin. "Let us not," he says, "be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, *envying* one another." And our Litany, you will remember, marks the opposition still more strongly, and brings it out more clearly still. You will remember at once, too, how we pray our good Lord in this Litany, to deliver us from "*envy*, hatred, malice, and all *uncharitableness*." As if hatred and malice were the natural results of *envy*, and that all three involved a loss over want of Charity or Love, that is, "*uncharitableness*."

There is something especially opposed to the grace of Charity in the sin of envy. There is a breadth, and a freedom, and a large-heartedness, and a kindly feeling of making allowances, and attributing the best possible motives to others, and an unselfishness, and a contentedness about Charity or Love, which seems to have its exact antipodes, or opposite in envy. "Charity envieth not," the Apostle says in our text, because Charity or Love cannot be, and is not, and envy can be, and is, narrow, suspicious, full of harsh and hard and unkindly judgment, full of selfishness, and discontent, and murmuring, and jealousy.

Now, as God is Love, and therefore includes in His Divine perfections everything that we think of, and more than we can think of if we had all the intelligence of saints and angels, and were to think for all eternity, as

God, Who is Love, I say, includes in Himself all that is good. So we shall find really that in some sense we can say just the opposite of envy, that is, it leads to, or, as it were, includes in itself everything that is bad or evil. It is really wonderful, when we begin to think either of the great Love of God on the one hand, or on the other of the great sinfulness of sin, and especially of any of these deadly sins : it is wonderful how much deeper our insight is into the Love of God, how it seems to radiate, to send forth rays of light and beauty in all directions, and how in that light, and with the reflection of that light upon it, how infinitely hateful and abhorrent sin becomes to us. It is like looking down into a deep gulf at first without a light, or with a very faint unsteady light, we see only a confused dark mass, but with a strong light thrown down upon that gulf we begin to distinguish all the horrors, and to see them singly in all their loathsome deformity and hideousness. And this is especially true of envy. It is only when we begin to know, and the very best of us are only beginning, the best of us only know but in part, we see but through a glass darkly, but God is Charity, God is Love : it is only when we begin to *know* this, that we see, in some degree, the sinfulness of such a sin as envy. It is not too much to say that the whole history of the human race is bound up and affected by that one sin. Envy brought sin into the world, and envy crucified our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ. This seems a tremendous

thing to say, but it is not only no exaggeration, but precisely and absolutely true. For it was *envy* at the happiness, the purity, the innocence, the love, the obedience, the contentedness of man, which caused Satan, the devil, the enemy of man, to tempt our first parents to sin, and so indeed to bring about the fall of man, and to introduce sin and *death* into the world. Well may envy be called, and form one of the sad catalogue of deadly or mortal sins.

Again, it was envy, the very same spirit of evil which crucified Charity or Love in the Person of the Lord of Life. We are expressly told that it was for "envy that the Chief Priests had delivered Him." No doubt they cloaked it under a pretence of zeal for religion, but even a heathen like Pilate saw through the pretence, and stripped off that cloke, and laid bare the sin itself, for S. Matthew says, that "*He knew* that for envy they had delivered Him." And bitter unscrupulous envy it must have been, for when even Pilate himself was willing to release Him, "the Chief Priests moved the people that he should release Barabbas," a robber and a murderer, and over and over again, they were instant with shouts that Jesus should be crucified. They had nothing else to say. When Pilate asks, "Why, what evil hath He done?" their unreasoning, and unreasonable, blind fury and hatred, prompted by, and the result of, envy, could give no answer, but to cry out the more exceedingly, "Crucify Him."

And, it is very strange to think how near these two

qualities of religious zeal and envy may be to each other. It is more striking in the original language. For the same word stands both for zeal and envy. It is awful and awfully sad to think how often we may be tempted in small ways to put one forward, and to keep the other secretly in our hearts, and hardly to acknowledge it, even to ourselves. To call, or let that be thought zeal, which really after all, may be envy. This spirit lingers often and unconsciously in otherwise good and holy men. Nay, it may insidiously be at work even when one step removed from ourselves. We may be indirectly envious, as well as directly envious. There may have been some of it even in a great Saint of God like Joshua, who, when Moses came out of the Tabernacle, told him that two men were prophesying in the camp, and he said, "My lord Moses, forbid them." No doubt it was, at any rate, chiefly zeal for the Lord which prompted Joshua thus to speak, but it is evident that there was a mixture of envy at the depreciation of his master's authority which indirectly reflected on himself, and, so to speak, made him of less importance. And this we see from the large-hearted answer of Moses: "Enviest thou," he said unto him, "for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and the Lord would put His Spirit upon them."

And, again, this sin of envy leads to another great sin, of which little is thought: I mean the sin of detraction. It consists of a series of hints and cautions, often appar-

ently given in good faith, or stories told against others, often exaggerated, often absolutely false, or doubtfully true, which tend to lower one person in the estimation of another, simply and solely because we are directly envious or because their stricter life is an indirect reproach upon our own.

Then, also, what sin is there which is so great a cause of discontent and bitter feeling between class and class, between rich and poor, between employers and employed, than this same sin of envy? Envy places happiness in having just what we wish for, but Charity trusts all to God's Love in knowing better than we do what is best for us. Envy, if it is once admitted into, and takes possession of, the heart, stops at nothing, and drives out all virtues and graces from it. Envy cannot co-exist with a healthy condition of the soul, no more than mortification can co-exist with a healthy state of the body. It is as Solomon says in the Book of Proverbs, "the rottenness of the bones." "Wrath is cruel," he says, "and anger is outrageous, but who is able to stand against envy?" There is something open in anger, bad and deadly a sin as it is. Still we may be angry on just occasions and not sin. A softer answer may turn away wrath; but envy is as a stab in the dark. For the most part it is secret and stealthy, besides being bitter and unscrupulous. For where "envying and strife is," S. James says, "there is confusion and every evil work."

“Men of the world,” S. Alphonsus says, “look on things with many eyes,” that is, have several inordinate views in their actions, as, for instance, to please others, or to obtain riches, and if nothing else, at least to please themselves. But the Saints have but a single eye, with which they keep in view in all that they do, the sole pleasure of God, and with David they say, “Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth I desire in comparison of Thee.” What do we wish for, what need we wish for in this world or the next save God, and God alone? He is our True Riches. He is the very Lord and the very desire of our hearts. “Let the rich,” says S. Paulinus, “enjoy their riches, let the kings enjoy their kingdoms, but Thou, O Christ, art my Treasure and my Kingdom.”

May God give us, day by day, more of that blessed gift of Charity and of His Love which envieth not, which desires nothing, but, day by day, to know Him more, and to love Him more, and to be happy and bright and contented with our lot in life, whatever that may be, however seemingly less bright it may seem than that of some. Let us ask, day by day, for more of that spirit of Love which may burn out from us the slightest speck or spot of envy or unkindly speaking, or even of unkindly, uncharitable *thinking*, for Jesus Christ's sake.

SERMON IV.

Flippancy.

I COR. XIII. 4.

“Charity vaunteth not itself.”

IF we are trying to form our lives upon that of our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, Who is Divine Charity, Divine Love, Very Charity, Very Love Himself, we must of necessity find some of these characteristics of Charity or Love which S. Paul gives us in this Epistle in ourselves. We must of course find them all in Him, that is, our Blessed Lord. For if we take any one virtue, or mark of holiness, or even what we commonly call good quality, we must needs find it in Him. God is Charity. God is Love: and in Him, in our Blessed Lord, S. Paul tells us, “dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;” and of ourselves he says that we “are,” and are to be, “complete” or perfect “in Him.”

In one sense it holds true, then, that as we cannot say of our Blessed Lord, that He is wanting in this or that virtue, however great, or however small, so we ought not to be able to say it, even of ourselves: I mean, if we

were as we should be, or as He would have us to be. "Be ye perfect," He says, "even as your Father, which is in Heaven, is perfect." He would never command what was impossible. And, therefore, His Apostle follows in the same strain when he says to these same Corinthians in his second Epistle, "This also we wish, even your perfection." And again to the Hebrews, "Let us go on unto perfection."

So that whatever grace or virtue we feel and know to be wanting in ourselves, we are never to say that it is beyond our reach, contrary to our natural disposition, or unsuited to us, but simply to aim at obtaining it. Above all, we are never to despise what we think to be little graces or little virtues any more than we are to think lightly of little faults or little sins. There are two remarkable sayings of S. Teresa, which are remarkable, not only for their deep knowledge of the spiritual life, but also for their common sense: because the higher we attain, or the deeper that we go into the spiritual life, the more full we shall be of common sense—not what the world calls common sense, but what the Gospel calls by its other name of prudence or wisdom, when we are told to be "wise as serpents," yet also "harmless as doves." And prudence, wisdom, or common sense teach us not to despise little virtues, nor to neglect little faults or sins. And so these "little sins," says S. Teresa, "are a sort of worm which is not detected before it has eaten into the

virtues." And, again, more strikingly she says, "By means of small things the devil goes about making holes for great things to enter."

Nothing is too great, and nothing is too small, for the love of God. And if we could only love Him as we ought, we should ourselves think nothing small or insignificant which was contrary to His will, or which detached us from Him, or was injurious to ourselves, or made us in any way come short of perfection, each in our separate state or condition of life, as S. Alfonso so beautifully says, "God wishes all to be saints, and each one according to his state of life : the religious as a religious : the secular as a secular : the priest as a priest : the married as married : the widow as a widow : the man of business as a man of business : the soldier as a soldier : and so of every other state of life. And this is the true interpretation of those great words of S. Paul in the Epistle for this week, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."

Now, as God is Holy, and as God is Love, it follows that the more we increase in holiness, the more perfectly we shall fulfil the will of God, which is our sanctification. And so S. Paul, after having, as it were, given the prelude in the end of the last chapter, when he says, "Covet earnestly the best gifts, and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way : " he points out that way in this present chapter, in his descriptions of the characteristics or marks of Charity positively in what it is, or negatively in what

it is not : positively in what makes, and negatively in what mars our own advance in holiness, or that of others, and then he begins his next chapter with the short and practical application, "Follow after Charity."

The characteristic or mark of Charity which we have to consider this evening is in that it "vaunteth not itself." It is the second of the negative characteristics. S. Paul began by two positive descriptions. He told us what Charity is, viz., that it is long-suffering and kind, or, in other words, patient and gentle. Then he passes to the relation of Charity to one of the deadliest of the deadly sins, and opposes it to envy in giving us the first negative virtue of Charity, "Charity envieth not," and then he comes to the second, our text and subject for this evening, "Charity vaunteth not itself."

It seems, at first sight, a great leap from the deadly sin of envy to something so small or trifling, as we may be apt to think it, as this, we should call it little sin, of vaunting. Envy, we may say we know, is a deadly, and a dangerous, and a loathsome despicable sin, but if, taking vaunting in its common meaning of boasting, we only mean speaking of any good qualities which we think we possess, or of any good deed we may have, or think we have, done, or if any so-called accident of birth or position in society, or any social advantages, so-called, which we are supposed to enjoy : if vaunting means nothing more than this, surely we are disposed to say, it is hard to have

it linked to such a deadly sin as envy. Surely a little vaunting or boasting need not destroy the grace of Charity from our hearts. By a little vaunting and boasting, a little angling for praise, we mean neither to rob God nor our neighbour of the mead of Charity. We think we need not love God less, nor our neighbour less, by a little harmless talking of ourselves. Yes, but we do. We rob both God and our neighbour, and, indeed, we rob ourselves. We rob God, because in vaunting we forget that it all comes from Him, and we cannot possibly have anything whatever to vaunt or to boast of. We rob our neighbour, because, unconsciously, perhaps, we put him in a lower position than ourselves, and look down upon him, or we may make him envious of us. And we rob ourselves, because we deprive ourselves of the reward of any good we may have done. The grace of Charity is deprived of its bloom, or indeed of its fruit, by vaunting or boasting.

But besides this, vaunting or boasting almost always is linked with exaggeration, and from exaggeration to untruthfulness it is only one step. And as God is Truth as well as Charity or Love, so He cannot dwell in the heart which is given to untruthfulness or to pride, both of which spring directly from vaunting or boasting, and, therefore, "Charity vaunteth not itself." Charity and humility go together, and as humility loves to be hidden, so does Charity. But the very meaning of this vaunting

is the shewing off of oneself, and the very beauty of both Charity and humility consists in their hiddenness : in their doing good by stealth, in their not letting the right hand know what the left hand does : in their not being seen of men : in their almsgiving without sound of trumpet (yes, without the faintest sound), not vaunted in subscriptions, or vaunted in confidence to such well chosen friends who are sure to repeat the thinly-veiled vaunt : in their prayers in the closet, and not ostentatiously, not in conspicuous places, not at the corners of the street : in their fastings with anointed heads and washed faces, and not in rigid rules vaunted to their neighbours, not in smiting with the fist of strife and debate, and harsh and unrighteous judgment of others.

But so far I have only taken the word in its common sense, and as it stands in the English version of our Bibles. Even so, it is suggestive enough. But with the light of the original upon it, and also in Vulgate or Latin interpretation, it covers wider ground still—or rather it becomes more homely and practical in its meaning. It is especially a homely word, and being a homely word, it is peculiarly forcible, and coming as it does from S. Paul's Epistle, it has a more pointed meaning still. It occurs here only in the New Testament : so it is peculiarly a word of S. Paul. It is said to be a word peculiar to Cilicia, the very country, we shall remember at once, of which Tarsus the birth-place of S. Paul, was a city. The word

alone will not explain its meaning. Vaunting or boasting is only one of its meanings. Besides this it may mean pertness, petulance, forwardness, boldness, shamelessness, incorrectness of manner or conversation, lightness, gossiping, chattering, coquettishness, flirting, wantonness, flippancy, rashness ; all these and kindred faults and sins may be included in the expression here used by S. Paul which we translate, " Charity vaunteth not itself."

So that really it means that Charity is the opposite of all these. Charity is graver, retiring, modest, self-controlled in speech and action, self-disciplined. Because the love we have for God prevents our injuring our neighbours by such faults and sins as these, which we sum up in the words, foolish lightness of conduct and flippancy of conversation with shewing off, whether by speech or gesture, or even dress. Charity vaunteth not itself. Because Charity is framed upon the model of Him to Whom we should shrink, even in thought of attributing any one of these sins, and if we shrink in applying it to Him, we should shrink from such sins and inconsistencies in ourselves.

We must be careful, however, where to draw the line. We must be careful to stop short at that point in our geniality or open-heartedness, or pleasantness and brightness, and when we trench upon the ground of careless and inconsiderate speaking or jesting, which are not convenient, or are unbecoming to the Christian, to the

follower of Christ : or which may be misinterpreted, or run the risk of doing harm to others, and so are really uncharitable. Hear what S. Chrysostom says in his Homily on this very passage : "Charity," he says, "vaunteth not itself," that is, is not rash ; for it renders him who loves both considerate, and grave, and steady in his movements." And so Tertullian : "Charity," he says, "savoureth not of wantonness, she hath derived her modesty from Patience."

Nothing will help us so much, I suppose, dear brethren, to keep this grace of Charity, or rather Charity in this aspect, as the grace of humility. Let us keep ourselves humble in the sight of God, and then we shall find an immediate check placed upon all vaunting and boastful useless conversation or talking. All talking of our good qualities, or needless mention of the faults of others, all want of consideration and forwardness, or flippancy, or lightness of manner, or conduct : it is this very vaunting or forwardness which is opposed to that gentle, kindly, retiring, humble spirit which should characterize the Christian, and give us, and form in us, or increase in us, that grace and blessing of the Charity which "vaunteth not itself."

SERMON V.

Pride.

I COR. XIII. 4.

“Charity is not puffed up.”

JUST as the last characteristic of Charity, which we considered the other evening, was in its not vaunting itself : so the next, which shall be our subject to-night, is in its not being “puffed up.” Both are evidently forms of pride ; and both, as evidently, have their opposites in the one virtue of humility. Charity “vaunteth not itself,” is not boastful, forward, flippant, perverse, rash and foolish, and exaggerated in speaking : and Charity is not “puffed up,” is not pompous, inflated, empty, and unreal.

This word, in one or other of its forms, which S. Paul here uses, is only to be found, throughout the whole New Testament, in his Epistles, and not only so, but only in his Epistles to the Corinthians, with the one exception of the Epistle to the Colossians, ch. ii. 18, 19, where it occurs once, in a remarkable passage, which I must quote. In that passage S. Paul speaks of, as being “vainly *puffed up* by a fleshly mind,” that is, as having no depth of spirit-

uality, having no real practical vital religion, but only resting on empty forms and external observances, and having no *solid* foundation or basis for religion, living a kind of fictitious life, which can only last for a very short and uncertain time ; just like the branch of a tree through which the sap has almost, if not quite, ceased to flow, or a paralysed limb, which rather exists than lives, or more accurately like (as S. Alphonsus says) "a balloon filled with air, but whose greatness in reality is nothing more than a little air, which, as soon as the balloon is opened, is quickly dispersed." So S. Paul seems to say : do not take a shadow for the substance, do not be taken in. "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly *puffed up* by his fleshy mind, and not holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

It will, I trust, be thought well worth while to bring together the other passages where this word occurs in the original. Holy Scripture is its own best interpreter. It is the Spirit, the Holy "Spirit of God, Who searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." It is His "Word" which "is a lantern unto" our "feet, and a light unto" our "paths."

Especially, almost exclusively, to the Corinthians, S. Paul uses this expression of being "*puffed up*." We find it no less than six times in his first Epistle, and once in

his second. In his first Epistle, ch. iv. 6, he warns his Corinthian converts not to be "puffed up for one against another," and there was peculiar need for the warning: as he says elsewhere, not to say, "I am of Apollos, and I of Cephas," or as Rupertus says, I am a Benedictine, and I am an Augustinian: or as we may say, I am a follower of this preacher, or I of that. . In the same chapter, too, he speaks of some of them being "*puffed up* as though" he "would not" go to them, and in the next verse he repeats the expression, and says, "But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are *puffed up*, but the power." This puffing up being especially an appearance of power without the reality, a rebelling against lawful ecclesiastical or spiritual authority. In the next chapter we get the key note or clue to the circumstance which causes him to use this word so frequently. "Ye are puffed up," he says, "and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you." He touches upon the root of their conduct, the conduct, I mean, of these Corinthians, and brings the virtue or grace, and the fault or sin we are considering, into contrast, or antithesis, when in the 8th chapter, verse 1, he says, "Knowledge puffeth up, but Charity edifieth," which has its parallel in our text, "Charity is not puffed up," and also in the first part of this present chapter, when he says, "Though I have all knowledge, and have not Charity, I am nothing."

And once more, towards the close of the second Epistle to these same Corinthians, ch. xii. verses 19 and 20, he says, "We do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying." Not for your amusement, not merely to interest you in our teaching, but for your edifying, to build you up on a solid foundation, not merely to excite you, not to run you up only for show or for sham, but to build you up, story by story, firmly and solidly. "For I fear, lest, when I come," (to inspect you, as it were,) "I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not, lest there be debates, envyings," (you will remember, "Charity envieth not") "wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings," which last is the same word in the original as that which we translate in the text as being "puffed up."

It is difficult, at first sight, to distinguish between this opposite of Charity and the last, namely, between "vaunting" and being "puffed up." They seem to be very much like each other. Nevertheless, of the two, I cannot but think that the present, the one we are now considering, is the more dangerous sin of the two. It has its attractions for a higher stamp of mind. Its special danger appears to me to lie in an affected mental, and above all, a spiritual superiority. Vaunting is under all its ramifications (as I explained them in the last sermon) on the face of it eminently silly, and would present no attractions to a mind of any power, or thoughtfulness, or depth

of religious character. Vaunting is superficial, and shews at once on the surface, and is so far harmless. But being "puffed up" is a far more insidious sin. It may indeed be the exact opposite of vaunting. Vaunting is the temptation of unreserved persons, whereas being puffed up would be the snare into which reserved persons might very easily fall. Being "puffed up" would include such forms of pride as would branch out into haughtiness, fastidiousness, a contemptuous manner in speaking, or of gestures, or, above all, secret contempt for others: arrogance, self-complacency, coldness, reserve, disdain, disregard of the feelings of others, spiritual pride, as well as its coarser form of pomposity and vulgar self-assertion.

Now the mere knowledge of oneself is not sufficient to eradicate any one of these sins out of ourselves. We do not want merely to know ourselves, but to know ourselves with a view to make that knowledge of ourselves serve to make us more as we ought to be, or rather as God, Who is not only all knowledge, but all Love, all Charity, would have us to be. For knowledge "puffeth up," but "Charity edifieth." Humility, above all interior humility, lays the foundation deep and secure, and then builds upon it a solid and a lasting structure. Knowledge makes a mere lathe and plaister building, a sort of "puffed up" building, without depth or solidity, or reality of foundation. But humility with Charity (and the one cannot exist without the other) raises up a real, and a substantial, and, as

as it were, a habitable edifice. Between the two there is all the difference, as between a Tower of Babel and the Temple of God, or between a house fair to look upon and a house fit to dwell in.

There are many ways of testing ourselves as to whether our Charity is, or is not, "puffed up." We must remember always that the danger of being "puffed up" is one that very easily besets us. It besets us in our professions and occupations, whether they are secular or sacred, in our natural gifts, and, above all, as we advance, or fancy we are advancing, in a spiritual life. We are, for the most part, then, above all other times, open to be tempted by a spirit of intolerance, and not making allowances for others. We hold the truths we have been taught, very dearly it may be, and, from that very fact, are apt to shrink from contact with those who differ from us. We are often wanting in geniality. We are not winning enough. We are too apt to keep our good things to ourselves, and hold back in coldness and reserve from others who do not agree with us. It is easy enough and pleasant enough, for the most part, to get on with those who agree with us, and who think as we do. We are willing enough to be taught by them, to defer to them, to be humble with them, but the difficulty lies in our dealings with those who oppose themselves. We are so apt to shrink into ourselves in reserve, and in that very shrinking, strangely enough ! puff ourselves up. I do not mean

for a moment that religious controversy is a good thing ; it is quite the reverse. But one can quite imagine the irritating effect it has upon an earnest, though mistaken, enquiring mind, which we immediately set down for an opponent, when we shew, by our manners, that we do not think them good enough or spiritual-minded enough to talk to, or even to try and win. Here you must be careful to draw the line. To talk promiscuously about religious matters, and above all, what are the inner things of religion, to everybody, or to every scoffer, is to throw pearls before swine, which our Blessed Lord has expressly forbidden us to do ; but to give an answer of the hope that is in us with humility, and reverence, and godly fear, is quite another matter. God will take care of His own Truth—out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and if our hearts are full of religion, it will surely find its way to our mouths, and will shew itself in our actions. We shall speak simply, and really, and naturally. We shall not only speak the truth, and speak out, but speak it in Love, that is, in Charity, in that Charity which is not “ puffed up.” We shall not be, which is the worst form of puffing up, offensively dogmatic. We may be quite certain that the more deeply, and the more dearly we hold the truth, the more humbly, the more considerately, we shall advance it : the more good we shall see in others, the more conscious we shall be of our own failing. And as with the people, so with the priest. He may be

quite sure that the sermons, which are violent attacks upon other systems, from whatever school of theology they come, whether so-called High Church, or so-called Low Church, betray, as a matter of certainty, scant knowledge, and a very poverty of Charity. We have enough to do to edify ourselves and our hearers, without being "puffed up" with the knowledge which edifieth not, but is occupied with pulling down and destroying. We all live in such frail houses, both priest and people, that we can rarely, if ever, afford to throw stones.

Let us all be carefully on the watch against these swellings of pride or self-complacency, which are so contrary to the real, true, deep, humble Charity, which should be our guiding motive of action. When occasions do arise for us to speak out, let it be done with the greatest possible love and gentleness, which are by no means inconsistent with firmness and truthfulness. The world is very clever and very quick at detecting "puffed up" Charity, and a feigned zeal, which really are neither Charity nor zeal, but simply more or less carefully and speciously disguised forms of pride. Let more and more of the spirit which breathes in that beautiful 131st Psalm, reign in us: "Lord, I am not high-minded: I have no proud looks. I do not exercise myself in great matters, which are too high for me. But I refrain my soul, and keep it low, even as a child which is weaned from his mother: yea, my soul is even as a weaned child."

SERMON VI.

Unseemliness.

1 COR. XIII. 5.

“Charity . . . doth not behave itself unseemly.”

THIS wonderful chapter, the more we think of it, seems to cover an indefinite space of ground in the region of religion, and to take in all the graces and virtues of holy living. It seems also to lay hold of the *opposites* of these graces and virtues, and focus or concentrate them all, and bring them up into one point as their corrective, namely, that of Charity. We may look upon Charity as a starting-point, or a stem, or a root, dividing off and branching out into every grace and virtue of holy living: or we may trace all these graces and virtues down to their foundation or source, and if they are real graces and true virtues we shall find that they inevitably are based upon, or spring from, Charity.

For what, after all, is holy living but holy Love or Charity? And what, after all, are sins, or any one sin, but breaches, or a breach of the law of Charity, that is, the Love of God and Love of man? Or what, after all,

is sin but the contrary, the opposite to, or, in its chief, the adversary of God? And God is Charity, God is Love. And, therefore, every sin is contrary or opposite to Charity or Love. So also every sin has its corrective, as well as its forgiveness, in Charity or Love. It has been well said that he who truly loves cannot be a heretic. And that which is true in theology is true also in morals. He who really loves, has true Charity, cannot, so far forth, sin. For as S. John says, "He that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him." It is the want or the loss of Charity or Love which produces sin. And yet, at the same time, it is this very "Charity" or Love which, as S. Peter says, "covers a multitude of sins." Prudence or sobriety is good. Prayer is good. But "*above all things*," S. Peter says, "have fervent Charity among yourselves : for Charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

What is this sin, then, which we have to consider to-night? or rather, in what respect does it depart from, or how far is it opposed to Charity? "Charity," our text says, "does not behave itself *unseemly*." If so, it is evident that Charity does behave itself seemly. But what is the force of this word "unseemly?" To us it should be, I think, a singularly attractive word for its very homeliness and its pure Saxon origin. And yet, strangely enough, it is curiously like the original in sound as well as in sense. To act in an "unseemly" manner is really to act contrary

to a scheme to form which is becoming, or due, or right. It is, in fact, to be deformed ; for there is a deformity of mind as well as a deformity of body : and just as deformity may affect various members of the body, so also may it affect various qualities of the mind or soul. Hence we get an enormous range for this word unseemliness. Beauty is the very type or attribute of God's creation. All things, as they originally left the Creator's hand, were beautiful, being "very good." All things were "seemly" and "comely." Sin alone marred their fair proportion, and their seemliness and comeliness. Sin alone introduced deformity and undue proportion. Man was created "seemly" in the image of God. The impress of God's Love was upon the soul of man. God is Love. God is Charity. So Love or Charity is not, and cannot, and doth not, behave itself "unseemly," unlike the Image upon which it was formed or fashioned.

And so again, as God is Love, God despises none. He condescends to weakness and infirmity. He sees and grieves over the departure from the type which He has supplied for His creatures. But God is so long-suffering and so kind. He wills and wishes to see the perfection of those qualities, as far as they are lost, reformed in us as His children. He longs to see us long-suffering, and kind, and unenvying, and humble. So "Charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up, and doth not behave itself unseemly."

The word of which "unseemly" is a translation occurs but rarely in the New Testament, and that only in S. Paul's Epistles. But its opposite is of frequent occurrence, as, for instance, in the Epistle to the Romans: "Let us," says the Apostle, "walk honestly," that is, in a "*seemly*" manner; or in the Corinthians, "Let all things be done *decently* and in order," or as when S. Mark speaks of Joseph of Arimathea as an "*honorable* counsellor," or twice in the Acts the word "honorable" is added as an epithet of women, and in one instance joined with "devout." From these and other instances, which it would take too long to go into, we gather what S. Paul means in the present passage, when he says, "Charity doth not behave itself 'unseemly.'"

God has given to each of us a part to play: and we are to play that part with dignity, and consistency, and seemliness. We are not, as it were, to act out of that part: and this part, that of the Christian: and, therefore, it must be Christ-like, full of comeliness, and order, and dignity. Still, on the other hand, we must get a true and just reading, and a right appreciation of this part. There must be nothing stilted or affected about one's propriety or seemliness of conduct. It must be thoroughly solidified with Charity. There is a native dignity about that Charity which is seemly, which cannot be put on. It is almost innate. It can be acquired only so far as religion makes us real, and natural, and simple. Just as you shall see persons

of humble origin (to use for a moment a colloquial phrase) be as truly refined, and act with the most perfect dignity and sense of propriety, as persons of rank and education. Christianity, that is true Christianity, is a wonderful refiner. It teaches people their proper stations, and places, and positions, and functions, and, if you will, manners. It civilizes them in a high and true sense. It qualifies them as citizens of Heaven. And this, too, is essentially the office of modesty and purity—the most seemly of all virtues. There is nothing so refined, and dignified, and seemly, and becoming, as modesty. And modesty and purity are closely allied. They are twin sisters. You may search the wide world through and find nothing so seemly as a modest and pure man or woman. A refined mind, refined, I mean, in a Christian sense, revolts from immodesty, whatever form it may take, whether of impurity, or forwardness, or pride, because its Love is a Christian Love, and not mere impulse of passion. “Charity doth not behave itself unseemly.” If it be real Charity, real Love, it is mindful upon what it is founded, and whence it has its source, and to what end it tends, or what is its ultimate object or result.

But this word “unseemly” will bear a closer inspection and more looking into yet! The contrary to this special aspect of Charity is to be found in many defects of character, as well as in positive vices, for instance, in uncouthness, rudeness, want of civility, want of civilization,

abruptness of manner or speech : they are all unseemly. Because all these things wound the feelings of others. And Charity, which is Love, never can wound. It comforts itself at one and the same time with dignity and tenderness : with almost excessive sensitiveness for the feelings of others, and none for its own, except when it concerns a question of principle. There is a duty to be performed : it may be to a child : it may be to a friend : it may be to a servant. "Charity doth not behave itself unseemly." It knows where to draw the line between being over-rigid and over-lax : over-indulgent or over-severe : over-affectionate or over-cold. True Charity, I say, acting on principle, will know where to draw the line between the prompting of one's feelings, and what is due to the occasion, or what is due to God, what is owing to Him, what He expects from us : and He says by this Apostle, "Owe no man anything but to love one another."

But there is still one more interpretation that I am bound to notice. The Latin version of the Vulgate, and so, of course, necessarily, many Commentators take this as "Charity is not ambitious," a translation which does not at first seem to be borne out by the original, but at the meaning of which we arrive in this way. "Charity doth not behave itself unseemly," does not, that is, lower itself by condescending to mean, and dishonorable, and unseemly acts, and vile practices, in order to forward its own interests. This is just what ambition does. There

is scarcely a depth of degradation to which an ambitious man will not stoop, in order to gain some honor which he covets.

Now to that very meanness and vileness to which men of the world will stoop for the sake of ambition, to that same will Charity stoop also for the sake of the Love of God and our neighbour, and yet *that* stooping shall not be "unseemly." Nay, it shall be without the least loss of real dignity. A king may, so to speak, make himself quite at home in a peasant's cottage without detriment to "seemliness," without undue condescension on the part of one or undue forwardness on the part of the other. One Charity must be the motive which underlies the action of both. We are all bound to respect the Image of God, the likeness of God in each other, whatever may be our rank or station of life. Charity, remember, is the very bond of peace and of all virtues, as our collect for Quinquagesima Sunday so beautifully reminds us. It is the bond, it is the link, the tie which binds together class and class. If

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin,"

how infinitely true this must be of nature when it is transplanted into the higher and holier region of the supernatural?

Carry all this up to the model of Charity and Love, and see where this lands us. Consider the "seemliness"

of the Charity of our dear Lord Jesus Christ. What dignity and yet what condescension ! what perfect self-possession and yet what abandonment of self ! what purity, what modesty, what retiredness ! what humility in the King of Heaven, without any loss of dignity, making fishermen His companions and intimate friends ! He eats with the Pharisee, and yet is a guest of publicans and sinners ! He is left alone with the woman taken in adultery and pardons her. He welcomes the Magdalen and forgives her. He converses with the woman of Samaria, to the astonishment of His Disciples. He despises none. He hides not His face from shame and spitting. He gives His back to the smiters in the flagellation or scourging. He dies the shameful death of the Cross ! and in all that unseemliness Divine Charity is most seemly : most dignified : most attractive : most loving : most charitable. Yes, in His Person, the person of very Charity herself, "Charity doth not behave itself unseemly."

Yes, there is a shield of proof about real Charity, and Love of God, and our neighbour, which will always teach us to do or to say the right thing without any compromise of our real dignity or seemliness. If we have this Love of God in our hearts as our mainstay and principle of action, we need never fear the judgment of our fellow-men. God sees, and knows, and judges. And to Him as our Master we stand or fall. That Love, that fitting, becoming, seemly Charity is the check upon our

thoughts, and words, and actions. It, and it alone, will teach us when to go forward and when to hold back. It matters little what we seem, it matters everything what we are, and upon what principle we act. If we have but the Love of God shed abroad in our hearts, and overflowing towards others, our Charity never can behave itself "unseemly." There is a natural, allied to a supernatural grace about Charity, which will guard us from all appearance of evil, will enlighten our understandings, and enkindle our affections, and will be both a guide and a safeguard, and give grace and seemliness to us in all that we think, or say, or do.

SERMON VII.

Selfishness.

1 COR. XIII. 6.

“Charity seeketh not her own.”

THE last characteristic of Charity, which we considered the other day, was that Charity “doth not behave itself unseemly.” We found that there was, as it were, a two-fold meaning to the phrase, or, indeed, to the word itself. First we found that modesty and dignity, as being parts of seemliness, were the invariable accompaniments of Charity. But secondly, also, we saw that with this guard Charity would ever stoop, or seem to stoop, without really stooping, to what (to the eyes of the world would appear unseemliness), out of the Love of God and of her neighbour. And in so doing she would be acting according to the Divine Pattern and Example of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is God, and, therefore, is Charity. Hence Charity is so humbling herself, or Love, in its very unseemliness, would be most seemly, that is, most closely following out that end to which God destined man. Most closely being re-modelled upon that original, from a scheme

in which man was first created, and the soul of man was by Baptism regenerated.

Let us begin with, for I must not pass over, the great words of the great S. Chrysostom on this passage: "S. Paul," he says, "sheweth the tempers of mind, on account of which "Charity doth not behave herself unseemly." And what is that temper? That she "seeketh not her own." For the Beloved she esteems to be all: and then only behaveth herself unseemly, when she cannot free Him from such unseemliness, to benefit her Beloved, she doth not so much as count the thing unseemliness." This is the same thing as to say that the counterpart of yourself is in Him you love. He is your real self. Therefore you would seek His interests as you would your own. And so S. Chrysostom adds, "This is friendship, that the lover and the Beloved should no longer be two persons divided, but in a manner one single person, a thing which no how takes place except from love. Seek not, therefore," he adds, "thine own, that thou mayest find thine own: for he that seeks his own, finds *not* his own. Wherefore also the same S. Paul says, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth," or well being. "For your own profit lies in the profit of your neighbour, and his in yours."

But a greater than S. Chrysostom and a greater than S. Paul is here. Let Charity Himself speak (as He speaks in the word of this week's Gospel*), "I seek not," He says,

* Fifth Sunday in Lent, S. John viii. 50.

“ Mine own glory : there is One that seeketh and judgeth.” Whose should be glory but His Who is the King of Glory ? And yet He sought not His own glory, but the glory of the Heavenly Father and His own *shame*. Yea, Divine Charity, in seeking His own shame, sought our salvation. “ See,” says S. Cyprian, “ how, by first descending from the Heavenly height into earthly places, the Son of God scorned not to put on the flesh of man, and while He Himself was not a sinner, to bear the sins of others. He put off His Immortality, He suffers Himself to be made Mortal, that He, the Innocent, may be slain for the salvation of the guilty. The Lord is baptized by His servant, and He, Who was to give remission of sins, Himself disdains not to wash His Body in the laver of regeneration. *He* fasts for Forty Days, by Whom all others are fed. He hungers and suffers famine, that they, who had been in famine of the word and of grace, may be filled with the Bread of Heaven. He so seeks not His own, as to place Himself in the very position of His own Disciples. He did not preside over His Disciples as over servants in a Lord’s power, but gently and mildly He loved them with a brother’s affection. He condescended to wash the feet of the Apostles, but since He, being Lord, might, by His example, teach what manner of man a fellow servant ought to be towards his fellows and equals, He bore with Judas, even into extremity, taking food with His enemy, *knowing* him to be the foe of His own household, yet not

publicly revealing this. He does not even refuse his kiss. See, too, how He *seeks* the Jews, how great was the long-suffering and kindness of Divine Charity with them, bending the unbelieving unto faith by persuading them : softening the unthankful by yielding to them : answering with gentleness to them that used contradiction : in clemency bearing with the proud : with humility giving way to the persecutors, even unto the hour of His Cross and Passion. Ever seeking and ever ready to gather men who slew the prophets, and were rebellious against God."

Yes, the Life of Divine Charity, which is the Life of Jesus Christ, was a life summed up in one word as a life of search, a seeking for souls. So ever He sought them : by day and by night : in the crowded streets of the city and in the desert places : on the mountain-side and on the sea-shore : in the house of the Pharisee, and equally as in that of the Publican : amongst Gentile kings as amongst Jewish peasants : amongst the rich as amongst the poor : amongst the learned doctors as amongst the ignorant common people : in Bethlehem as at Calvary : in the cradle as on the Cross : at the beginning of His earthly life as at the end of it : at the beginning of His Passion as at the end of it : from the nailing on the bitter tree to the last sigh, or the loud cry of His departing Spirit. He seeks not His own : He sought no relief from Himself : He prays for His enemies : He prays for His mother ;

He prays for the beloved Disciple : He prays for the thief on the Cross : for in seeking them He, by that very fact, interceded for them. And even when He prays for Himself, it is such a prayer as can only be understood by including all. He is forsaken, derelict, left, as it were, the hull of that which had once been a gallant ship, left at the mercy of the waves, and all only that we should not be forsaken. When He thirsts, He thirsts only to be thirsted for. In commending His Spirit to the Eternal Father, He commends our spirits and souls to the keeping of that Father's Love. He descends to the lower parts of the earth to proclaim, not His own victory, or He only proclaims it that the good news of the Redemption should be proclaimed to the spirits in prison. He rises, as a pledge of our resurrection. He ascends, that we may now in heart and mind ascend, and when the time comes, also our body ascend with Him, be glorified with Him, and *with Him* continually dwell. "Charity seeketh not her own."

The special sin, then, against which we seem to be warned by our text, is that of self-seeking, or, in a word, of selfishness. "He who loves others," says S. Thomas Aquinas, "as he loves himself, seeks also the good of others as he would seek his own good ;" as S. Paul says, "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." This is just the opposite of what he says to the Philippians ;

"All," he says, "seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

And the sin of self-seeking takes an infinite variety of forms. It is perhaps the worst form of selfishness, because it is at one and the same time a more active, a more seductive, and a more insidious form. It may lurk unsuspected and almost unknown in our very best actions, even in those which are connected, and closely connected, with our religious life. It is often very hard, at least, sometimes, not to be influenced by self-seeking or selfish motives, even in religious work. It narrows and cripples our energies. It makes us self-deceived. It tends to make us, if it does not quite make us, hypocrites. We have a danger in professing, perhaps, to be very zealous or devout, and we may be covertly seeking to be well thought of. Self-seeking, too, makes us covetous and grasping, as well as unfair, and unjust, and dishonest, and murmuring, and discontented. We are apt to be rendered morbid and suspicious, as well as self-conscious and self-absorbed, wrapped up in self, by this sin, this unloving, uncharitable sin of self-seeking. It makes us totally and entirely oblivious and forgetful of others, except in so far as they may serve our purpose, and forward our own interests. We find everything and everybody a trouble to us, unless they, in some way or another, minister to our wants and our selfishness.

But the blessed Charity. "which seeketh not her own,"

how different it is! Heaven and earth are not wider apart. How totally, and entirely forgetful, and oblivious of self, that unselfish Charity is which seeketh not her own, but the well-being and happiness of others, and, above all, the seeking of God. Like seeks like. Charity seeks Charity, or God, Who is Love. It cares little or nothing for aught else. It knows that all the rest will come in time. It remembers how it is written, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." How deadly opposed this true Charity is, to that cruel, cold, worldly maxim, that "Charity begins at home." Ah! yes, it forgets that Charity was once homeless, and had not where to lay His Head, in order to procure for us an eternal home in the Heavenly Father's mansions. That Charity, which was Jesus Christ, fled from honour and the praise of men. It escaped from preferment and promotion when they would take Him by force to make Him a King. It endured hardness and privations. It bore with contradictions and interruptions, and all, that it might win some. It went out of itself in breadth, and length, and depth and height, in all that embracing love which passeth knowledge. Nothing was too great and nothing was too small for it. Everything was its food and its prey. It forgot, as it were, its own sorrows in the joys of others. It lost sight of its own happiness in the griefs of others. It became all things to all men. It calmed the Disciples'

fears in the storm. It soothed the widow's tears at Nain. It wept at the grave of Lazarus. It had its dealings with the woman of Samaria. It went forth to heal the sorrows of the soldier-centurion in the sickness of his son. It joined in the festivities of the Marriage feast of Cana. It forgot itself, and the scandal of the world, in suffering the embrace of the Magdalene, the woman who was a sinner. It took the little children up into its loving arms and blessed them. It forgot its very life and sought not to preserve it, but laid it down a willing sacrifice for the sins of others—"Charity seeketh not her own."

What more need I say, dearest brethren? What more need I say, but that if you will love God, if you will form and model yourself on the example of Divine Charity, yours must be that Charity which seeketh not her own! You must act, *we* must act, as if we, this self of ours, did not exist: we must try to lose, as it were, our very identity, and get it absorbed in the wealth and the well-being of others. All the formulas and schemes of philanthropy, all the cold and dried schemes of Charity, will never make us one whit more really charitable, in that Charity which seeketh not her own. Nothing but the Love of God, and utter forgetfulness of self, with self-sacrifice, will ever do this. That little word self, which plays so tremendous a part in our daily life, must be lost sight of and annihilated; or a smaller word, a word of one letter, must be put aside—I mean the word "I." That little word of one

syllable and one letter is the great obstacle and barrier to the Love of God, for in that word is contained the very essence of the love of self, self-complacency, and self-consciousness, and covetousness, and greediness, and unseemliness, and pride, and anger, and obstinacy, and conceit, and opinionatedness, and of self-seeking and selfishness.

The more we realize that our life is hid with Christ in God, the more we are able to say, "Not I, but the grace of God;" the more we are able to say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." The more truly, I say, we are able to realize this, the more we shall have and exercise that holy Love, that Divine Charity, which "seeketh not her own."

SERMON VIII.

Irritability.

I COR. XIII. 5.

"Charity is not easily provoked."

WHAT is provocation, but the *calling forth* in us, and from us, some emotion or feeling of the mind, by some external circumstance which moves, or stirs, or excites, or in some way or other affects us? It is perhaps the evil from within us, answering to, and going forth to meet the evil from without us. There is probably some dangerous, tender spot in the character or temperament of every one of us which is peculiarly susceptible to *provocation*. It may vary from time to time. It may shift from one point to another: just as pain itself in the body sometimes shifts from one member to another. We know also that certain conditions of the atmosphere, or certain postures of the body, or certain things which affect our sense of (it may be) hearing, or sight, or smell, affect each of us differently in a degree according to our peculiarity of sensitiveness of any particular sense. So it is with the mind. One thing which one person will bear without the

least feeling of annoyance will entirely ruffle and disturb another person's temper ; or again, one particular person, or a certain number of people, will have the peculiar gift, as it were, of saying, or even looking, or having a manner which almost, in spite of ourselves, seems so easily to provoke us, and cause us to be wanting in kindly feeling or Charity, that is, in that universal Charity by which we are bound and enjoined to be in Charity with *all men*. But there are persons who somehow always contrive to say the right things at the wrong times, or the wrong things at the right times : or they are wrong, and out of tune, out of harmony with us altogether. When we are in heavy and great trouble, they talk lightly and trivially to us : or they console us with just the very things that do not afford us the very least consolation : or when our minds are full of some weighty and important business, they seem to delight to detain us with some imaginary or fancied trouble of their own, or worse still, some story about their neighbour. Our kindly feeling, our Charity our courtesy, our self-denial (call it by what name you will) is chafing and fretting under it, and at least we are fairly (and often when it is a matter of frequent occurrence) "easily provoked," and, indeed, if we knew where to draw the line—justly. "Be ye angry, and sin not," says the Apostle, S. Paul.

Much depends, however, by what is meant by the word "provoked" here. The word is such a commonplace

everyday word, that we can be at no loss to attach a meaning to it in its commonplace and ordinary sense. When we hear such expressions as "I was provoked beyond endurance," or even of things which fall out according to the ordering of God's providence (and remember nothing, not a sparrow falls to the ground without it) that favourite perpetually recurring expression, "It is so provoking," when we come to sound (and if we are to be judged from, and give an account of, every idle word, it *must* be sounded), means really neither more nor less than this, that we are off our balance, that our mind has, for the time being, lost its equilibrium, and, therefore, are so far forth out of Charity with God and our neighbour. Of course, the range of thought in using such an expression, or giving vent to such a feeling, is enormous. It may go from this hasty passing phrase, dwelling or hardly dwelling for a moment on our minds, to the deadly sin of anger, malice, and all uncharitableness. At any rate, it is the beginning of sin; and, says the wise man, the "beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water:" that is to say, no one knows when or where it will stop.

No doubt one common form that this sin takes with us is irritability of temper. We call it sometimes constitutional irritability. We may excuse it in others: Charity enjoins to do so; but we must not excuse it in ourselves. It can be overcome. It has been overcome. It must be

overcome, though it cost us twenty-two years' work, as it is said to have cost a great Saint. Charity is not irritable, nor easily irritated, we may translate the text, is too placid, quiet, calm, to be hasty, &c.

It is not, my brethren, with an idea of exaggerating what looks like a venial sin, that one dwells so minutely and at such length upon it. But I question, when one fairly looks into it, I mean looks into the word itself and the sin which it represents, we shall find we are over-stating its danger, nor shall we easily estimate the greatness and number of the blessings of which it deprives us. One instance alone must suffice us to shew its great danger from a Scriptural point of view, and also how it may take any one of us at unawares, who may think ourselves least liable to it. Think of that man whom God Himself describes as very meek, saying, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." Think of him as he probably was in his time of trial, and mourning for the death of his sister Miriam. Think how long and patiently he had endured the frequent sins, and falls, and rebellings of the people of Israel in the wilderness during their forty years' wanderings. Picture him to yourselves, in that often repeated scene, when the children of Israel murmured against the Lord, and above all, of that particular time and circumstance when they chode with Moses because there was no water for the congregation. Surely there might have been

some excuse for him under such provocation, and at such a time ! Surely his speaking as he did might have been reckoned as a just and grave rebuke, or as zeal and eagerness to carry out God's commands ? Not so. Those were fatal words to him when he lost his self-control, lost command of himself, and he said unto them, " Hear now, ye rebels ; must we fetch you water out of this rock ? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice." Both the speech and the action were the result of provocation. His words were angry words, spoken indeed under provocation. He struck the rock twice, whereas God had commanded him to do so once. And so, later on, from the top of the Mount Pisgah, God shews him all the land which the Israelites were to inherit, but He says to him, " I have caused thee to see it with thine own eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither." And why we find in the book of Psalms, where we read, " They," that is, the children of Israel, " angered Him at the waters of strife, so that He punished Moses for their sakes. Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips." One act of disobedience lost Adam Paradise. One hasty word, spoken under provocation, deprived Moses of the possession of the promised land.

We may depend upon it that it is, in God's sight, a much more serious thing than we think, to be " easily provoked," especially if so meek a servant of God as

Moses was heavily punished for being carried away by his impatient feelings into the sin of being provoked to speak unadvisedly at such a trying time as when he was mourning for his sister.

We are content, day by day, to test, as it were, God's forbearance, and long-suffering, and power of endurance. "God," we know, and as it is written, "is a righteous Judge, strong and patient, and God is provoked every day." We find it often difficult to put up with the slights, or the ridicule, or the dulness, or the ingratitude, or the peculiarities, or the infirmities of men, or even of our children, and yet we are quite content to provoke God every day. We calculate rather on His patience than on His strength ; on His mercy rather than on His justice. We know full well, as we ought to know, the calls He makes upon us, upon our love, upon our time, upon our intellects, upon our faculties, upon our means ; and we give Him very little, a miserable proportion of each, and are content to believe that we are not provoking Him. God is patient, and waits in love for us. And yet we are so far from imitating this Charity, this Love of God, this God Who is Love, that we are ready to take offence at, and to resent sometimes, even the slightest annoyance, and are "easily provoked." We call to mind the example of the Blessed Lord, and we are unlike Him as we can well be. He endured the contradictions of sinners, being sinless Himself, and we, being sinners ourselves, will endure

no contradictions, but are "easily provoked" by them. He, when He was reviled, reviled not again : we, for hard words, often give back harder, or at least cherish hard, and hot, and bitter thoughts. Let us think of that Blessed Charity, that blessed, all-embracing, all-enduring Love of Jesus, when next we are provoked. Truly that Charity was not easily provoked, when not one interruption in His work, even for souls, not one insulting speech, not one taunt, or jeer, or mocking word ever disturbed the serenity of that great ocean of Love, the mind which was in Christ Jesus, the Holy Soul, the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Yes, it is the remembrance of the Lord Jesus in His life on earth, it is the recollection of the Presence of God, which will alone enable us to keep that perfect peace which those only can have whose minds are stayed on Him. We seem, as it were, to be out of reach of provocation. All else but Jesus seems to be so dwarfed and dwindled, to be of so little consequence, that even if we are intentionally provoked it has little or no effect on us, it makes no lodgment in our hearts, it rests no longer than a flake of snow when the sun begins to shine. It falls on the earth to melt, not to chill. Yes, we are out of reach, too, because our life, if it is a real life, is hid with Christ in God.

"O how beautiful is Thy goodness," says the Psalmist, "which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee, and that Thou hast prepared for them that put their trust in

Thee, even before the sons of men ! Thou shalt keep them secretly in Thy Tabernacle from the strife of tongues. Thanks be to God Who has shewed us marvellous great kindness," the access of His Charity, "in a strong city," even from that blessed city of God, whose King and Prince is the Prince of Peace.

SERMON IX.

Detraction.

I COR. XIII. 5.

“Charity thinketh no evil.”

THE next quality, or mark of Charity, which we have to consider, is, that it thinks no evil. It follows naturally from its last mark or characteristic, which is, that Charity is “not easily provoked.” Only it is a higher stage of holiness, nay, it is the highest, for there can be no higher. If our thoughts are safe, and safely guarded, there is no danger to the words, much less to the actions. “The thoughts of men,” says a great spiritual writer, “are a world to themselves, a vast and populous world. Each man’s thoughts are a world to himself. We all of us have an interior world to govern, and he is the only king who governs it effectually, who knows, that is, how to rule his thoughts. There is no doubt that we are very much influenced by *external* things. Nevertheless, our true character is found *within*. It is manufactured in the world of our thoughts, and there we must go to influence it. He who is master there, is master everywhere. He

whose energy covers his thoughts, covers the whole extent of self. He has himself completely under his own control, if he has learned to control his thoughts.

In some degree our thoughts are a more *true* measure of ourselves than even our actions. Our thoughts are not under the control of human respect. No one knows anything about them. No one can tell what we are thinking about. There are thousands of things which we are ashamed to say, or to do, or to have known about us, which we are not ashamed to think. It is not easy for our thoughts to be ashamed of themselves. They have no witnesses but God. Our thoughts are not bound to keep within certain limits, or observe certain proprieties. Religious motives can alone have a jurisdiction over them. The opinion of others does not affect them. The struggle which so often ensues within us before we can bring ourselves to do our duty goes on entirely within our thoughts.

A great deal more might be said on this subject; but if our thoughts be of all this importance, and if kindness, or to use another word, Charity, be of the importance it is, it follows that kind thoughts, charitable thoughts, thoughts which think no evil, are of use and consequence. If a man habitually has kind thoughts of others, and that on supernatural motives, I mean not only because he happens to be of a good tempered, or good humoured, easy-going disposition, but on supernatural motives, that is, as the result of grace, he is not far from being a saint.

Such a man's thoughts are not kind intermittingly, or on impulse, or at hap-hazard. His first thoughts are kind, and he does not repent of them, although they often bring suffering in their train. All his thoughts are kind, and he does not chequer them with unkindly ones. Even when sudden passions, vehement outbursts, have thrown them into commotion, they settle down into a kindly humour, and cannot settle down otherwise.

Kind thoughts imply a great deal of thinking about others. This, in itself, is rare. But they imply also a great deal of thinking about others without the thoughts being judgments of their conduct, or criticisms. This is rarer still. Active-minded people are naturally the most prone to criticize, and to judge, and to find fault, and, in a way, to think evil or unkindly thoughts, or disparaging or contemptuous thoughts. Such people must, therefore, make kind thoughts a defence against self. By sweetening the fountain of their thoughts they will destroy the bitterness of their judgments.

But kind thoughts imply a great nearness to, and a close contact with, God. Kind thinking, even when evil is known to exist, is, if one may so say, an especial attribute of God, because He is not extreme to mark what is done amiss, because, as the Apostle says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses." So the origin of kind thoughts cannot be anything short of Divine. God is their source

and spring. They are not dictated by self-interest, nor stimulated by passion. They have nothing in them which is insidious, and they almost always are the preludes to some sacrifice of self. They are unmixed and simple as God Himself. They have no previous prejudice. They have no ulterior motive of self-interest. They are Christ-like in their humility. "For even Christ," says the Apostle, "pleased not Himself." Kind thoughts, for the most part, imply a low opinion of self. They are an inward praise of others, and because inward, therefore genuine. They cannot be flattery because no one knows them. No one, who has a good opinion of himself, finds his merits acknowledged according to his own estimate of them ; his reputation, therefore, cannot take care of itself. He must push it, and he must push at the expense of others, and a pushing man in the world is always unamiable, because he is obliged to stand so much on the defensive. But the man with kind thoughts, having that Charity which thinketh no evil, has no rights to defend, and no self-importance to push. He thinks lowly of himself. He finds others pleasanter to deal with than himself, and others find him so pleasant to deal with by reason of his humility and kindness, that love follows him wherever he goes, a love which is the more faithful to him, because he makes so few pretences to be loved.

But there is another class of kind thoughts, which is more closely allied to our text, I mean kind interpretations

of the conduct, of the thoughts, words, and actions of others—"Charity thinketh no evil." It imputes no evil. It assumes no evil. It reckons no evil in others. It does not judge harshly or hardly. The habit of not judging others is one which is very difficult to acquire, and which is generally not acquired till very late in the spiritual life. If people have ever indulged much in judging others, the very knowledge or sight of an action almost indeliberately suggests an internal commentary upon it. "Judge not," it is written, "and ye shall not be judged." The decree of the last judgment is absolute. It is this : the measure which we have meted to others, that same measure shall be meted to us again.

Men's actions are very difficult to judge. Their real character depends, in a great measure, on the motives which prompt them, and these motives are invisible to us. We may guess at them, but we do not see them, we cannot know them. Appearances are often against what we afterwards discover to have been deeds of virtue. Nobody can judge men but God, and we can hardly obtain a higher or more reverent view of God than that which represents Him to us, as judging men with perfect knowledge indeed, and unperplexed certainty, and yet with undisturbed compassion, with boundless Charity. The habit of judging others, that is, of thinking evil, requires a long process to eradicate it. We must concentrate ourselves upon it to keep it in check, and this check is to be found

in kind interpretations in inspecting, not evil, but good motives, in the "Charity" which "thinketh no evil." We must come to esteem very lightly our sharp eye for evil on which we perhaps prided ourselves as cleverness in detecting, or, as we called it, unmasking it. It has been to us a fountain of sarcasm. We thought ourselves, and others thought us, so knowing in laying bare motives, and scenting out what was wrong in other people's characters. And how seldom, since Adam was created, has a sarcasm fallen short of a sin. We look at people, and are by way of taking in their whole character (as we have manufactured it) at a glance. We credit ourselves with our penetration, our knowledge of character, our skilful analysis. We forget that all this *may* be, that there is a terrible possibility, or even a probability of its being, a huge uncharitableness. We should have been much better without it from the first. No doubt this knowledge of character may be a talent, but it is the hardest talent of all to manage, because it is so difficult to make any glory for God out of it, so difficult to trade with it to any profit for God, for our neighbour, or for ourselves. We are sure to continue to say clever things or sharp things as long as we are by way of judging others : and there is not much difference between sharpness and acidity. Sight is a great blessing, but there are times and places in which it is far more blessed not to see. Of course we are not to grow blind to evil, or we should become unreal, if not

evil ourselves. But we must grow to something higher and something truer than a quickness in detecting or suspecting evil, if we would have anything of that blessed "Charity," that Love which "thinketh no evil."

We must rise to something truer. Yes! have we not always found, in our past experience, that, on the whole, our *kind* interpretations were truer than our harsh ones? What mistakes have we not made in judging others? But have they not almost always been on the side of harshness? Every day something of this kind occurs. We have seen a thing as clear as day. It *could* have but one meaning. The other side of the question never occurs to us. We have already taken measures. We have roused, and perhaps given vent to our righteous indignation, and even excited the indignation of others. All at once the whole matter is differently explained, and that in some most simple way, so simple that we are lost in astonishment that we should never have thought of it ourselves. On the other hand, *how* many times in life have we been wrong, when we put a kind construction on the conduct of others? Rarely, if ever. And if they *have* been mistakes, at least they were mistakes on the right side.

The practice of kind thoughts tells most decidedly on our spiritual life. It leads to great self-denial, about our talents and influence. Criticism, that is, in a word, prejudging of others, is an element in our reputation, and an item in our influence. We partly attract persons to us by

it : and we partly tempt them to imitate and to criticize, too, in their turn. We partly push our principles by means of it. We put ourselves and our opinions forward by it. The practice of kind thoughts converts us to the surrender of all this. It counteracts and uproots it all. It makes us again and again in life sacrifice successes at the moment they are within our reach. Our conduct becomes a perpetual voluntary forfeiting of little triumphs, the necessary result of which is a very hidden life. He who has ever struggled with a proud heart and a bitter temper, will see at once what innumerable and vast processes of hard fighting in the spiritual combat all this implies.

But it brings its reward also. Thinking no evil, that is, thinking kind thoughts, endows us with great facility in spiritual things. It opens and widens the paths of prayer. Our prayers are not hindered and checked by uncharitable, unloving thoughts. It sends a clear light over self-knowledge. It enables us to find God easily, because we are linked on to Charity, and God is Charity, God is Love. It is a fountain of joy in our souls which rarely intersects its flowing, and then only for a little while, and for a greater good, and that it may flow forth in a more abundant stream.

Above all, the practice of kind thoughts, of the Charity that thinketh no evil, and the abstaining from evil thoughts, are main helps to that complete government of the tongue

which we all so much need, which we all so much covet, and without which, the Apostle says, "all our religion is vain." What the beauty of that soul is, whose attitude, as it were, is habitual kindliness of thought, no words of ours can tell. There would be in it such an intense peace, such repose, such a calm, such placidity, such intense happiness, such union with God, as no picture drawn from, or no words of man could possibly convey to our minds.

SERMON X.

Taking Pleasure in Faults of Others.

I COR. XIII. 6.

"Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity."

LET me try to sum up as far as we have gone. It is as well to endeavour always to keep the steps we have traced together in our minds. Just as one likes in memory to linger over the points which have struck us of some beautiful country which we have travelled over in years gone by, or as a soldier loves to fight his battles over again, or as a sailor loves to recall the incidents of his voyage from port to port, as he brings before his mind such and such a danger in which he was placed, or such and such a bright spot in the voyage: or as a man of business likes, not only to keep his books balanced, but to reckon up the items of his gains and losses, with a view to profit by them for the future. So in our journey over this land of Love, or this ocean of Charity, let us go back for a moment over its landmarks and its prominent features, in order that we may not lose the thread of our thoughts, and give some kind of unity to the design which we have,

or ought to have, to form, or have formed, in ourselves, our minds, and hearts and souls, even of this blessed Charity, this God of Love, and this Love of God and of our neighbour, with all its marks, or characteristics, or component parts.

We have spread before us the map of a lovely country, but a country, nevertheless, which has its dangerous passes and difficult passages as well as its attractive scenery. A country which has its precipices, and snares, and pitfalls, as well as its sunny landscapes. A landscape full of light and shade. Its light brightening its shade, and its shade throwing its light into strong relief. Nay, it is just these very surprises of light and shade which constitute the very beauty of this country.

Let us look back upon this Chapter and we shall see that in it we are taught what Charity is, and then what it is not, and then again, what it is. And yet we can scarcely tell where the light begins, and where the shadow ends, the one melts into the other. At the same time they are strongly contrasted. At one moment we are on the hill, and then in the valley. But on the hill we see down into the valley, and in the valley we look up to the light, or the hill. And we see that the very light from the hill, and the shade of the valley, have but one source and origin in, and are dependent upon one cause, namely, the Sun. God is Charity, God is Love, and any departure from God, and from the Law of Love, that is, the Law of Charity, is

sin. And so to know and to measure the sinfulness of sin, is to take it up to, and to look at it in the light of the Love of God. Hence S. John, the Apostle of Love, in his Epistle says, "he that dwelleth in Love," that is, in Charity, "dwelleth in God, and God in him;" and again, "Whosoever abideth," or dwelleth in God, that is, in Charity or Love, "sinneth not." So far forth, then, as we abide in Love, so far do we dwell in God, and so far do we not sin.

And so in looking back upon this Chapter of Charity, this Psalm of Love, and taking God, the God Who is Love, as our standard, and looking at its various points from the Light of His Love, we are on the one hand encouraged and comforted by the beauty and light of the characteristics of Charity, and we are warned on the other hand by its opposites and contrasts. We see with this new light upon the Chapter, or rather a light which, though it may be new, we have brought to bear upon it, we see, or ought to see, I say, as we never saw before, the sinfulness of any departure from the Law of Love, because it is a departure from the God of Love, it is a departure from the bright warm Sun, into the cold shadow and gloom.

Or, again, we may take the Chapter as supplying to us the whole armour of God, and we may take each of its parts, that is, each of the characteristics, as Charity negative or positive, as of the different pieces of that

armour, both defensive and offensive, with which we are both to guard and to fight against the attacks of the Evil One, who is the enemy of God, who is the spirit of hatred, who is very sin himself, who only hates us because God loves us, and who hates God because God is Love, who would only draw us to sin because it is *through* us alone he can have any hope of, as it were, reaching and wounding God, with that same petty malice, as well as bitter hatred, with which a man, who cannot directly injure one more powerful than himself, wreaks his vengeance on one of his friends, and so indirectly wounds the real object of his hatred, through his Love.

There are, as nearly as I can divide them, about fifteen characteristics, or marks, of Charity given us in this Chapter, both positive and negative, and both these necessarily imply their opposite sins or contrasts. The first two describe what Charity *is*. It is long-suffering, or patient. It is kind. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind." Then follow seven *negative* descriptions of Charity, what it is *not*. It is not envious. It is not light or frivolous. It is not proud. It is not ambitious. It is not irritable. It is not censorious. It does not take pleasure in the sins or in the misfortunes of others. "Charity envieth not : Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity." And then the Chapter ends with six positive descriptions

of Charity. It rejoices with or in the Truth. It bears, or covers, or conceals all faults of others. It believes all things, it has, that is, all Faith, for there can be no Love where there is no Faith. It hopes all things. It endures all things. And last, and greatest, it never fails.

“Charity rejoiceth in the Truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, Charity never faileth.”

The sins, as being departures from the Law of Charity, which are implied as contrasts to these graces may be briefly summed up thus :—¹ Impatience, ² Unkindness, ³ Envy, or jealousy, ⁴ Flippancy, ⁵ Pride, ⁶ Ambition, or unseemliness, ⁷ Selfishness, ⁸ Irritability, ⁹ Detraction, or harsh judgment, ¹⁰ Pleasures in faults or misfortunes of others, ¹¹ Obstinacy in rejecting what we know or believe to be the truth, ¹² Malicious mischief-making, ¹³ Despair or discouragement, ¹⁴ Want of endurance, ¹⁵ Want of perseverance.

The characteristic of Charity which we have to consider, then, this evening, is, that it does not rejoice in iniquity. It is the last of the negative characteristics of Charity, and is joined to the first of the last six positive characteristics. “Charity rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” Let us see what it is to rejoice in iniquity. Rejoicing in the truth, I leave (D.V.) for another occasion.

The reader will notice that two changes have been made in the titles, which I cannot help feeling the Author would have made himself. ED.

At first sight it would have seemed almost superfluous on the part of the Apostle so to describe Charity. At first sight we are inclined to dismiss the idea from our minds, that it would be possible to rejoice in iniquity. For to rejoice in iniquity must mean to take positive pleasure in sin. It is at the end of a long catalogue of terrible sins that S. Paul says of them, "Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." But looking more closely into ourselves we may be able to perceive, at least sometimes, at any rate, the germ or first beginning of a rejoicing in iniquity, or taking pleasure in sin. Sin has a natural attraction for us. Grace alone can outcome it. And it is only in proportion as we grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that is, to know of the Love or Charity of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we are in just that proportion removed from sin. And our sinful nature, our sinful inclinations, are not only kept in check, but transplanted and transformed, as the Apostle says, "The *natural* man receiveth *not* the things of the Spirit of God."

So, again, is it the very office of true Charity, that is, the Charity of Christ, the Love of Christ for us, and our love for Christ, to constrain us, to guide us, to hold us back, or to urge us forward in our natural inclinations when rightly directed, as it is written, the "Love of Christ

constraineth us." Hence when the thought of taking pleasure in anything which is *contrary* to the will of God, anything, that is, which is contrary to the righteousness or justice of God (which is the exact equivalent to the word iniquity), anything, in a word, which is sin, when we are tempted, I say, in any way to take pleasure or to rejoice in any one of these things, whenever the thought of, or the inclination to such a pleasure crosses our minds, immediately Charity steps in—"Charity, the Love of God, God Who is Love, God Who is Charity, rejoiceth not in iniquity." Charity, "the Love of Christ, constraineth us."

But of course the converse of the proposition is equally true. If Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, evidently it must grieve for iniquity. If it takes no pleasure in the sins of others, it must necessarily suffer pain for them. Nay, more, Charity does not only not rejoice in, but sorrows for, and sympathizes with the misfortunes as well as the faults of others, even if those others are our enemies, even if they have injured us. I am not at all sure that there is not a tendency in us at times to take a kind of secret pleasure, just short it may be of rejoicing, in the misfortunes of others. I have no doubt whatever that there would be a great danger of such a temptation, supposing that we were gainers by such misfortunes. For instance, if we gained promotion, or an increase of income, or any temporal prosperity, or advantage of any kind, by

the dismissal or disgrace of any person through their misconduct or iniquity. If this were so how far should we be disposed to grieve both for their sin and for their misfortune? Or should we rejoice at our own gains, and so indirectly at, and even in their iniquity, which may have been the occasion of our gain? Or even irrespectively of any such gain to ourselves what really would be our feelings, I mean our inmost, secret feelings, at the fall of anyone whom we may have envied for their superior goodness, or of anyone who has thwarted our plans, even for good, or of any who has deliberately and wilfully injured us? Should we rejoice at their fall, at their iniquity? Should we, I do not say openly, proclaim our satisfaction (from that we are evidently precluded from doing as those who profess godliness), and what would our secret feelings be? This is the lowest and mildest form of such rejoicing—but if we yield we have not that Charity which rejoiceth not in iniquity, for we should rejoice in that which is a cause of shame and sorrow to others. We should not, as the Apostle enjoins us, “rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”

Set before yourselves two pictures; or let it be one picture with its vivid contrast of light and shade. Think who indeed it is that does, in the fullest sense of the word, rejoice in iniquity: the reason of whose very being is to rejoice in iniquity: whose very life and occupation is to

joy and revel in iniquity : whose very pleasure, and delight, and happiness, and rejoicing is in sin : who is the very parent of iniquity, and so rejoices in his accursed offspring : who dwells in delight at the sad wreck he has made of many a soul by causing it to take pleasure in sin, and to rejoice in iniquity. And then think that in rejoicing in iniquity, whether in taking pleasure in sin for sin's sake, or in openly or secretly rejoicing at the sins or misfortunes of others, let us, if we are so tempted, say each one for himself, I am indeed so far forth at one, and associating myself with the Enemy of God, and the Enemy of my soul, the Devil, the Adversary, the Spirit of Malice and Evil, and all hatred and uncharitableness !

But, on the other hand, think with joy and gratitude of Him Who so "commendeth His Love," His Charity, "towards us, in that while we were yet sinners," that is, while we were yet in iniquity and unrighteousness, while we were yet His enemies, "Christ died for us." The joy that He set before Him was not the power or even the the justice of the Conqueror, in punishing rebellious subjects, but the joy of rejoicing in bringing us back as the good Shepherd, to the fold from which we had strayed. And for that joy, He "endured the Cross, despising the shame." All His message to us seems to be summed up in the words of the Prophet, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God : wherefore turn yourselves and live ye." His sorrow and grief were

for our iniquities. He bare even with rejoicing the iniquities of us all. That Charity, that Love of Christ, rejoices not, but sorrows over every sin, every unrighteousness, every transgression, every iniquity of ours. The Righteous suffers for the unrighteous, the Just for the unjust, the Holy for the unholy, the Innocent for the guilty.

Surely, then, we should be much on our guard against such sins as those of pride, or jealousy, or envy, or anger, which are so apt to carry us off our balance and tempt us in any degree to fall away from Charity, and so to rejoice in iniquity. Let our joy be kept for rejoicing in the goodness and holiness of others: and let our humility teach us that they are far greater than ours. Let us, so far from rejoicing in sin or iniquity, even irrespective of others, get a horror and a hatred of them. Let us make no terms and no truce with them. Let us mourn for the sorrows as well as the sins of others, but let us hate and not rejoice in those sins, whether in others or in ourselves.

SERMON XI.

Rejecting what we Know to be the Truth.

I COR. XIII. 6.

“Charity rejoiceth in the Truth.”

OR, to quote the whole sentence, “Charity rejoiceth *not* in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth.” So far, that is, is Charity from rejoicing in iniquity, that it grieves for it. So far is it from rejoicing in iniquity, that it rejoices in equity, rejoices in all that is righteous, and holy, and good, and beautiful, and true. And not only rejoices *in*, but rejoices *with* (for that is a more exact rendering of the original) the Truth.

Charity does not only rejoice in the possession of the Truth, for that would be selfishness, but rejoices with it whenever she finds it in others. Possessing the whole Truth herself, and yet being too humble and too loving to be arrogant in the possession of it, she recognizes as a part of herself, as it were, very grains of Truth in masses of error, by attracting them to herself by the Truth which they hold, or seem to hold, or that remnant of a righteousness, which is, or seems to be, still left in them : remnants

of righteousness even in the life of the unrighteous. Just as a magnet draws to itself grains of true metal out of a mass of sand, so she draws others to the whole Truth.

No wonder that the last negative characteristic of Charity which we considered is placed next to, and in antithesis or contrast with, this first of the last set of positive characteristics. We could scarcely have a greater or more striking contrast. To rejoice in iniquity, to take pleasure in evil, whether for evil's sake alone, or because we are in some way gainers by it, is indeed a deep depth of wickedness. And to rejoice in the Truth, or rather to rejoice with the Truth, is often a high height of holiness, because, first, it is a very near approach to God; it is a partaking of the Divine nature, For as God is very Truth Himself, as well as very Charity or Love, He necessarily rejoices in this great attribute of His own Divine perfections, both in Himself, and in and with His creatures, in whomsoever of them it may be found. And next, because rejoicing in, or much more rejoicing with, the Truth, is an unselfish act, often costing us much sacrifice of our prejudices, or opinions, or self-will.

It is one of the purest of pure joys to rejoice in or with the Truth. In order to do so we must not only have true and loving hearts, but also a firm hold of the Faith ourselves. And what a comfort and a blessing and a joy that is! For before we can rejoice in, or with the Truth, we must thoroughly have received and believed in it our-

selves. We must know what the value of this precious Truth is which God has committed to our charge. We shall feel that it is that pearl of great price which, in order to secure, or to retain, having once secured it, we are ready to part with our all, and, if need be, with our very lives. And as Truth and Trust go together, we know, and feel, and are sure that we shall be defended, and supported, and helped, and comforted in our efforts for the Truth's sake : as it is written, " Strive for the Truth unto death, and the Lord shall fight for thee."

Still the rejoicing in the truth is a joy with which no stranger can intermeddle. As the heart knows its own bitterness, so no stranger can intermeddle with its joy. There may be, and are, other common grounds of rejoicing, but the rejoicing in the possession of the Truth in common is a joy which lies apart from all other joys, and obviously cannot be shared alike, and without distinction, by all. That bond of union in the world which is the result of congenial tastes, and similarity of pursuits, and likeness of disposition, is so far the production of a kind of mutual sympathy and joy. But it cannot compare with its own self when it is transplanted into a far higher and truer sympathy and joy, when it is a common and mutual rejoicing in the Truth. This constitutes the joy of all the Festival seasons of the Church. What are they, after all, but a mutual rejoicing in the Truth, the one Truth held by us all as members of the Church, the true Church

of Christ? What are they but the outward expressions of that rejoicing? What else are the solemn celebrations of the Blessed Sacrament, and Processions, or the inner bond of union between priest and people, or of Christian with Christian, but a rejoicing in the Truth, in the common possession of the Truth, or, in other words, a rejoicing in the "Truth as it is in Jesus," a rejoicing in the Lord, as the Apostle says, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, Rejoice?"

Rejoicing in the Truth does away with all doubts. Doubts are dismal, and incompatible with joy and rejoicing. Doubts, no doubt, will arise sometimes, but rejoicing has a buoyancy which at once, or at least in the long run, will over-ride them. It does away with indifference. There is a want of heartiness in indifference which is incompatible with rejoicing. Indifference is cold and stolid and self-satisfied. Rejoicing in the Truth accepts heartily, and believes implicitly and lovingly. It solves Pilate's sad question and problem of "What is Truth?" Faith has taught us the Truth, and once gained, and thoroughly received and apprehended, it is rarely, if ever, lost. As little would a man dream of letting go a life-buoy when he is sinking, as losing his hold of the Truth. Like Faith, and being, as it is, a part of Faith, and indeed identical with Faith, it is a supernatural gift. It is the "Gift of God," Who is True and the very Truth. It is union with Christ, Who speaks of Himself, describes

Himself as "The Way, the Truth, and the Life." It is a consequence of the Incarnation, and the Passion, and the Resurrection, and the Ascension of our Lord Jesus, and, above all, of the Mission of the Holy Ghost. "It is expedient for you," He said to His Disciples, "that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you," for "when," He adds, "the Spirit of Truth is come, He *will* guide you into all Truth." There is no mistaking that promise of Him Who is full of grace and Truth, of Him Who said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

The very first of the Twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit is Love, or Charity. And the very next is Joy. And so the Spirit of Love is the Spirit of Joy, as well as the Spirit of Truth. So, again, in the second of the Epistles of that Apostle, I mean S. John, we see the same combination and these same words recurring together. He addresses that letter to the Elect Lady and her children, "whom," he says, "I love in the *Truth*, and not I only, but all they that have known the *Truth*: for the *Truth's* sake which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever: grace be with you, mercy and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in Truth and Love." And then he adds, "I *rejoiced* greatly that I found of thy children *walking in Truth*, as we have received a commandment from the Father."

Charity, of necessity, too, must rejoice not only in the possession of the Truth, but also in the spread of it, rejoices, in a word, to share the joy with others : rejoices to make others partakers of its rejoicing. But, nevertheless, the rejoicing of Charity in Truth is much too deep and real to run the risk of marring the truth in others, and so of their rejoicing, by a due want of reticence and caution. The Truth, and by the Truth of course I mean religious Truth, is much too precious and sacred a treasure to be exposed like pearls before swine. Religious Truth must be put before people according to their capacity to take it in, if we would cause them to rejoice in it. Otherwise, the very end and object of teaching is defeated, and much misunderstanding, and prejudice, and angry feeling, and sorrow come, instead of much rejoicing, and love, and happiness. No doubt the derivation of this word Truth in the original is as of something without reserve, something not to be hidden. But that applies rather to moral Truth, of which nothing is true but the Truth, and the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth.

Still, on the other hand, too much reserve in proclaiming religious Truth, or not giving an answer for the faith that is in us, and the belief we hold and prize so dearly, goes very close to dishonesty. It is only indiscretion which does so much harm. We may be quite open, and sincere, and frank, and honest, without giving meat to babes, the food of strong men to weak infants. No

doubt, again, it is very hard to follow out the dictates of Charity in speaking of that religious Truth in which we rejoice. It is hard to see others in doubt, and we rejoicing in, and yet loath to impart that Truth. Surely we may, and ought to do so openly and frankly and honestly without the slightest prevarication, or hiding, or cloaking the Truth : but still with care and discretion : above all with humility, and gentleness, and Love, as the Apostle expressly enjoins, "Speaking the Truth in Love." And see to what a height, and to what a depth, the Apostle carries us from this point. "But speaking the Truth in Love" (that is, in Charity), he says, that we "may grow up into Him," Who is very Charity, very Love Himself, "which is the Head, even Christ. From Whom the whole Body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying or building up of itself in Love."

The Charity that rejoices in the Truth, then, is that Love which is so like the Love of God, the Charity which shrinks from, and rejoices not in iniquity. It is the Charity which not only rejoices in the Truth of God, but rejoices that others are true to God, rejoices at their goodness, holiness, and Love of the Truth : rejoices, at least, to recognize in them searchers for the Truth. It is that Charity which, guided by humility, loves to think

that others are truer to God, and to their trust, than we ourselves are : which believes, at least, that others, with our privileges, would make a better and truer use of them. It is that Charity which, from its own sweet secret spring and source of joy, is enabled to bear up with many disappointments, and hindrances, and neglect for the Truth's sake : which makes capital out of its very troubles, and rejoices to see itself put aside, if only the cause of Truth be advanced. The Truth is purity and fulness of belief, and so the Apostle says, "The end of the commandment is Charity out of a pure heart, and of a good Conscience, and of faith unfeigned."

Let us try, then, to hold and to proclaim the Truth, and to rejoice in the Truth with sincerity. There is a sense of freedom in the knowledge and in the holding of the Truth, which the world takes for slavery, but it is indeed the only true freedom because it is the Service of God. Love, Charity, smooths all difficulties. It teaches us at once to make our faith a working, and a practical, and a joyous Faith. It teaches us to rejoice in the Truth, to live under the shadow of the Truth. To be truthful : to be true to Him Who is very Truth, and for His sake to love to see that Truth taking root, and bringing forth fruit in others. It rejoices in such a sense, even, and with such intense Love, that it would willingly itself be ignorant of the Truth, so only that others possess it, and by its possession are drawn nearer to the God of Truth and Love.

SERMON XII.

Mischief-making.

I COR. XIII. 7.

“Charity beareth all things.”

“ABOVE all things,” says S. Peter, “have fervent Charity among yourselves, for Charity shall cover a multitude of sins.” Not only our sins, but the sins of others, or rather by covering or concealing the sins of others we have our own sins covered or concealed. By throwing the mantle of Love over the sins or imperfections of others, we ourselves, our own sins and imperfections, are covered or concealed by the mantle of God’s Love. “Blessed are the merciful,” says our Blessed Lord, “for they shall obtain mercy.”

As we draw nearer to the end of this brilliant catalogue of the graces of Charity, we find, as we should naturally expect, that the graces, these marks or characteristics of Charity, are more and more grand, and noble, and generous, and attractive: more and more supernatural, and deep, and spiritual. Observe how this expression, “all things,” is reserved for, and applied only to the last four

of the marks of Charity. Charity, the Apostle says, "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." He does not content himself by attaching this expression, or rather this single word (as it would be in the original), once only to these four characteristics of Charity, but he repeats it to each, as if he would desire to shew, especially in these four respects, how all-embracing Charity is, or should be : as if he would leave, as it were, no loophole, and have no rent in the mantle of Love.

But at first sight there seems to be so remarkable a similitude between the first and the last of these four characteristics of Charity, as to make them appear almost identical, and which necessarily renders it difficult to distinguish between them. For when we read in the first that Charity "beareth all things," and in the last, Charity "endureth all things," we may be perplexed to know the difference between "bearing" and "enduring." We are at once, however, supplied with a clue by looking at the words as S. Paul used them in the original language. But let me take this opportunity of fixing the thought well into ourselves, that there never can be what are called redundant expressions in God's Holy Word. God may choose to repeat Himself, or His words, but it would be blasphemy to think it was because He was at a loss for words. Nothing is superfluous in the Bible. Not a word can be taken from it, as not a word can be added to it.

Holy Scripture is God's inspired Word, adapted to the weakness and the ignorance of sinful man. It can never be criticised like any other book. When we fail to apprehend or take in the meaning of it, we must simply accept it, and believe in it as a mystery which God has not chosen to reveal any further to us. Otherwise, the field that we throw open is too wide and too terrible to think of. God has revealed the Truth, and His whole Counsel to the Church, which He has especially promised to guide into all truth; but to each individual He has made no such express promise except in so far as that individual is a member of the Church, and believes in accordance with her belief, and accepts her faith, and makes her faith his. We may, nevertheless, try reverently to penetrate into the meaning of His Word, or the Doctrines of His Church, but over and over again, or beyond a certain point, if we are met by difficulties, we need not necessarily and at once turn back, but as a rule (to which there *may* be exceptions), there we must stop, and humbly trust, and and love, and adore the Wisdom and the Goodness of the Almighty, All-wise God.

So in the consideration of this Chapter, of Charity, all the way through we have felt this difficulty of the similarity of the descriptions of its marks or characteristics. We could not help feeling that so very much more ought to have been said, and said so much better about all and each of them.

To return, it is evident, or at least more than probable, that there is a considerable difference between the expressions "bearing all things" and "enduring all things," as applied by S. Paul to his description of Charity in this Chapter. "Bearing all things" here does not mean "Suffering all things," as the Latin translation seems to take it, for that would be patience or long-suffering, the very characteristic of Charity with which S. Paul begins the Chapter. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind." It is a higher grace than that. That would be a passive grace, but the particular grace, or mark, or characteristic of Charity to which S. Paul here refers, is active. In one sense it is a passive grace, for it is a Charity which is tolerant, which puts up with the faults and the failings of others, nay, even *all* their faults and failings, for it "beareth all things." But the real meaning of the word, and the way in which it stands out in contradistinction to the other graces or characteristics of Charity, is, that it is that Charity which not beareth only, but concealeth all things. It does the very thing which it is always asking God to do, hides its face from, and shuts its eyes to, the sins, to all the sins of others. It is Charity which applies to itself what it asks of God in the *Miserere*, and in the *De profundis*. It turns away its face from the sins of others, as it asks, "Turn Thy face from my sins, and put out all my misdeeds." It is not formed of extreme measures or harsh judgments. It is not Pharisaical. It is not extreme

to mark what is done amiss. It has mercy, and lets "mercy rejoice against judgment." Out of the depth of its own humility and its own consciousness of sin it calls upon God, "Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice . . . If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? For there is mercy with Thee, therefore shalt Thou be feared . . . O Israel, trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plentiful redemption, and He shall redeem Israel from all his sins." And in that deep of God's Love it buries and conceals the sins of others.

It is terrible, and terribly sad, my brethren, to think what a keen eye we have for each other's faults. It is sad to think how clever we are at scenting or ferreting them out, at exposing them, and dragging them out into the light, either for our own, or for our neighbour's amusement. Even the dead are sometimes not suffered to rest unmolested in their graves. "When the dead is at rest, let his remembrance rest," says the wise man, but even they are not suffered to escape. "Speak nothing but what is good and kind of the dead," says the proverb, but how many a needlessly unkind tale is told of the dead, how unnecessarily are their faults and failings brought to light and exposed, instead of being covered and concealed by the "Charity" which "beareth all things." What punishment we may be incurring by such a sin as this it is

not difficult to say. Needlessly to expose the fault or sins of the living is bad enough, but needlessly to bring to light the sins of the dead is to attack, or even, it may be, to slander the defenceless, the reverse may be equally true. But defenceless in one sense they are not, for they may be not only not defenceless, but with their sins forgiven, and standing before the throne of God pleading for, I will not say crying for, vengeance upon us. Whenever we are tempted to speak ill of, or expose the sins of the dead, let us call to mind the vision of S. John the Divine in the Book of Revelation : " I saw," he says, " under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held, and they cried with a loud voice, saying, ' How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth.' " True it is that they are out of the reach of the tongue of slander or uncharitableness, but the sin is not the less great for all that.

The Charity of which the Apostle speaks here, is that blessed virtue or grace which, so far from injuring the reputation of any person by exposing their faults, not only conceals them, but protects these very persons, and interposes a shield, as it were, between them and the attack of their enemies. The very meaning of the word protect is to hide or conceal, by interposing some object between one who would seek to injure another. No doubt, from

time to time, cases will arise where faults have to be brought to light, and spoken of, and plainly told. But they are comparatively rare. And when they do arise we must be careful, even then, to preserve the golden rule of Charity, in concealing what it is allowable for us to conceal, in not magnifying or exaggerating these faults. Above all, we must make quite sure that it is our place and business to find them out, or to speak of them at all : and when we do speak, to be careful that we are not gratifying any private malice, or uncharitableness, or prejudice of our own.

But to *bear* all things, in the sense of concealing the faults of others by our Charity, is indeed to have a Christ-like spirit. It is to resemble Him very closely. It is to walk very closely in His loving footsteps. When need arose our gentle Lord was stern and strong in His reproofs, His rebukes, His denunciations, His reproaches. Constantly He lays bare and exposes the motives and thoughts of His enemies. He was indeed a discernor of the thoughts and interests of the heart. There is no creature that was not manifest in His sight. All things were naked and opened to Him with Whom they had to do. Constantly we read that He perceived the thoughts of their hearts, or that He perceived their wickedness. They were constantly trying or tempting Him. "Why tempt ye Me, ye hypocrites?" He says to them. He addressed the Scribes, and the Pharisees, and the Lawyers

as "hypocrites," or "whited sepulchres," or as an evil and adulterous generation.

But still how often He passes over their faults. How ready He is to make excuses for, or to conceal or hide them. Let two instances alone suffice : first, in the case of the woman taken in the deadliest of deadly sins. He stretches this Charity to its very verge, in speaking both of and to her. When they bring her before Him, He pretends, as it were, not to see her, nor to hear them, but stoops down and writes on the ground. At last He dismisses her with "go and sin no more." He addresses no reproaches to her ; His love, and mercy, and tenderness, and purity, were reproaches enough in themselves. So anxious did He seem not to take upon Himself the office of the Judge where it was not needed.

Then, again, on the Cross. He has eyes and ears for every one, but none for their sins. He has no rebuke for His enemies. His first words are those of forgiveness. He makes excuses for them. He hides and conceals their faults by cloaking it over with the plea of their ignorance. He accepts one sentence of faith and repentance from the penitent thief, as a reparation for a whole life of sin. O yes, too, He spreads a mantle of darkness over the whole land, as if He would fain not see those malicious upturned faces, watching His dying woes. Surely this was Charity. This is the God of Love. This is God Who is Love, bearing, concealing all things, by bearing

our sins in His Body on the Tree, and hiding them in His Sacred Heart.

What more need I say? I will only say this: If ever, when that great day of account comes, we do *not* want in terror to call upon the mountains to cover us, and the hills to fall on us, and the rocks to hide us; and if ever we *do* want to be hidden under the defence of the Most High, and to abide under the shadow of the Almighty, we must try to cultivate more and more of this blessed gift and grace of Charity, and especially of this particular mark or characteristic of it which teaches us to bear all things in concealing, or disguising, or hiding, or shutting our eyes to the faults or the sins of others.

SERMON XIII.

Despair.

I COR. XIII. 7.

“Charity believeth all things.”

THERE are two leading thoughts which this attribute of Charity brings into our minds. First, as connected with the last attribute which we considered, which was, that Charity “beareth,” that is, as we found it to mean, concealeth “all things.” So, we may take this, in connection with this last attribute, following the interpretation of a learned Commentator, where he says, and very beautifully, “Just as Charity conceals, and covers over the sins of our neighbour which *are* apparent or flagrant, so she gives them credit for, or believes or hopes all kind of good things of them which are not apparent.” Such a disposition no doubt has its dangers, and its faults, but probably, and as a rule, its faults are on the right side. But we get to a point beyond giving the benefit of the doubt, where, for instance, there is an equal probability of good and evil in a person’s actions, upon which we are, or may be, obliged to pronounce an opinion. Charity,

if we take this interpretation, not only refuses to believe evil, but believes all good concerning this person. It is ready to find and to make, almost to invent, excuses for their faults and failings, and to attribute good, which common sense tells us it is almost sure does not exist, and there *are* occasions when perhaps common sense and Charity come into conflict, and are in almost direct antagonism. No doubt this may be carried to an extreme, as, for instance, to look upon and to speak of a man whom we are nearly certain is a drunkard, as a steady or a temperate man. But it is just possible that to avoid the one extreme of censoriousness or uncharitableness we may fall into the opposite one of untruthfulness, or making light of sin. As a rule, then, when people's affairs are concerned, silence, unless we are obliged, as a matter of duty, to speak out, is the safest course. Unless we are certain of the contrary, certain, that is, of a person's bad character, or the probability is so great as almost to amount to certainty, to give the benefit of the doubt, to bear all things, to conceal all faults, to avoid all censure, to put up with all things, to feel, "*It may be, he hath not done it,*" is the safest course, and nearest to the Charity that "*believeth all things.*" And so, says the wise man, "*Admonish a friend, it may be, he hath not done it,* and if he have done it, that he do it no more. *Admonish thy friend, it may be, he hath not said it,* and if he have, that he speak it not again. *Admonish a friend:*

for many times it is a slander, and believe not every tale." Rather, that is, believe all good of him for "Charity believeth all things."

But we may carry this a step higher. The Charity which "believeth all things," is, and necessarily must be, closely connected with that "Faith," which S. Paul speaks of, as working "by Love." If we really love a person, we implicitly trust him. So, and in a far higher degree, if we really love God, we cannot but believe in Him. We cannot but have full and perfect faith and trust in Him. We know that God is Love, God is Charity, and hence it follows, and we know also that God is the giver of every good and every perfect gift, and "Faith," we are expressly told, is the "gift of God." True it is that the actions of our friends, or of those we love often perplex us, and, it may be, even distress, but for all that we do not lose our love for them, and if our love be a rightly founded love, we do not lose our faith, and confidence, and trust in them. So must it be with God and us, our love and trust in Him must be so implicit and so unquestioning, that we must be ready with Job to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

In this Chapter of Charity, or Love, we reckon some fifteen different marks, or characteristics, or signs, or attributes of Love, this blessed, chiefest of all virtues. If we take them altogether we shall find, perhaps (following a great Commentator), that the first twelve out of these fifteen

more immediately concern our duty towards our neighbour, and the last three our duty towards God. Often, no doubt, the one set of duties overlap and intermingle with each other, for we may take it as an axiom that we cannot love God without we love our neighbour, and we cannot really love, that is, have a rightly founded love for our neighbour, without loving God. Nevertheless, as far as we can discriminate, we may find this division more or less accurate, or at least useful to remember, if we take this Chapter in the form of a meditation. It might help us to remember the respective bearing upon or relation of one attribute to another, by remembering that God always so deals with us by leading us by degrees to Himself, often letting the lower love of mere human affection lead to the higher love in, and of Himself, often letting mere almsgiving teach us compassion, and brotherly love, and Charity in its higher and truer sense, taking, as it were, what is good in us, just for what it is worth, and transforming it to a higher good, taking the good which He Himself has implanted, and gently tending and fostering it, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear," and then, "when the fruit is brought forth," this good "Husbandman," Who had waited so long for the precious fruit of perfected Faith and Love, of the Charity which believeth all things, "immediately He putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come." So in this Chapter these fifteen steps (the same number,

let us remember by the way, as the steps to the Temple, and therefore of the Gradual Psalms), seem to lead us higher and higher from Charity which suffereth long and is kind, to the Charity which believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things—and never faileth.

But again, the higher we get, the more practical we must be, even in our religious belief. It is very simplicity which leads us to believe all things concerning our neighbour, which teaches us also to believe all things concerning God and our Faith. It is just the want of this child-like trustful Faith which makes us suspicious about our fellow-men, and which, at the same time, makes us cold and incredulous, or unbelieving in our religion. On the one hand we are always afraid of being imposed upon or unduly influenced, on the other we are afraid of believing too much, and so we are apt to be reserved, to hold back coldly, not only from our fellow-men, but from God. Instead of having that Charity which believeth all things, we are in danger of leading that loveless life, and having that loveless religion, which is so directly on the road to trust nobody, and to believe in nothing. Limits, and rightly there must be somewhere, but to believe too much is always safer than to believe too little: and probably to be imposed upon many times is safer and more charitable than to hold back once when we ought to go forward. "Let not thine hand," says the wise man, "be stretched out to receive, and shut when thou shouldest repay."

But there need be no limit to our love for God, and, therefore, to our trust in God. And short of credulity there need be no limit to our belief in our neighbour's goodness. As regards our faith and our belief in God, and in what He has revealed concerning Himself, we need not be afraid of superstition, for the Charity which believeth all things is itself a shield against superstition. A superstitious belief is a belief of fear, and perfect Love, perfect Charity, casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in Love. Still, at the beginning of this very same Chapter from which these words come, we are cautioned *not* to believe every spirit, but to "try the spirits whether they are of God." It is often, for instance, superstition which keeps people from the Blessed Sacrament, but it is only because they have not Charity which believeth all things, which embraces the fulness of Love, of which that Sacrament is the exhibition. They seem to hesitate to believe that God can have given so great a gift, when, at the same time, they believe, or profess to believe, that God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, in order that, to the end that all who believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. It is often superstition which keeps people from going to Confession. They have a kind of dread of going, partly because they have not that Charity which believes in the Precious Gift of Pardon, and of the application to the penitent soul of

the Cleansing Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ : or again, because they have not that Charity which would teach them to believe that the Priest only preaches confession, or hears confessions, because it is healthful for the soul, and just short of being necessary to salvation, or, at least, is most useful, most beneficial, most blessed : they do not think that the Priest preaches, and can only preach what he practises, or, at any rate, they do not assume what they are bound to assume by virtue of that Charity which believeth all things, that he does practise it himself.

Yes, Charity believeth all things ! God wants us, as it were, to deal with Him and with our fellow-men, as in a measure He Himself deals with us. He wants us to trust Him. He wants us to trust each other. He longs for our love. He longs for our unwearied trustfulness in Him. He longs to see this carried out in our intercourse with each other. He trusts us. He wants us to say with David, "An offering of a pure heart will I give Thee, O Lord, and will praise Thy Name because it is so comfortable." He wants from us an offering of a free, open, generous heart, a heart which we can only have in so far as we exercise this noblest and chiefest grace of the "Charity which believeth all things."

SERMON XIV.

Want of Endurance.

I COR. XIII. 7.

“Charity hopeth all things.”

MANY of the characteristics of this great blessed grace of Charity which we have been considering are evidently connected with the present and the past of our lives. But the one which the text contains, as evidently is connected with the future, and not only with the future of this life, but with the great unending future of the life eternal. It is really and truly the hope beyond the grave which gives life its brightness, which soothes its sorrows, and, in a word, makes life worth living. “If in this life only we have hope,” says the Apostle, “then are we of all men most miserable.”

Hope, like Faith and like Charity, is one of the three Theological Virtues, that is, it is one of those virtues which has, in a more direct manner, to do with God. It has God in a special manner for its end or object. By Faith *God* is believed in by us as the end of our being: by Hope we have a desire and expectation of possessing

God, that is, of attaining to eternal happiness : by Love, or Charity, God is loved by us above all things as our chief good.

Hope, then, is that supernatural gift, or grace, or theological virtue, infused into us, poured into our souls, as it were, by God. It is a virtue or grace by which, by the help of God, we look for, or rather, with boldness and courage, expect eternal bliss, and the helps or means by which eternal bliss is attained. And these means are definite and certain. We are bound to hope for eternal life, not only as we hear some say, "I hope to get to Heaven *somehow*," but to hope also, and by hoping for, strive after all means by which it may be gained. In a word, we are bound to hope for, or so to strive after, eternal life, or eternal bliss, or eternal happiness, such graces as those of holy living and dying, of overcoming temptations, of exercising virtues, and of obtaining pardon for our sins. This is why S. Paul says, "We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end." He speaks of those "Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them, which hope," he adds, "we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus."

But Hope must be connected with Love, and that Love must be of the highest and most unselfish kind. For

instance, we may hope for the recovery of the sick : but if Charity, or Love, in its truest and highest sense is mixed with our hope, then, as our Love, if it is unselfish, will hope for the highest good to the sick, so, if we knew, or had good reason for feeling that death would be better than recovery, then we should, in one sense, cease to hope for recovery. In a word, our hope would subject itself to the Will of God, in Love for, and trust in Him in the truer, higher, better Love for them we love. But again, it is Love that places no limit to Hope. It is Love that teaches us how good God is, for God is Love, and, therefore, Love places no limit to our trust, or hope in God. This is the fullest and truest meaning of our text, "Charity hopeth all things," or, as the Psalmist writes, "And now, Lord, what is my hope? Truly my hope is even in Thee." It is not without a significant meaning that that Thirty-ninth Psalm, from which my quotation comes, is the one appointed for the Burial of the Dead. When all other means fail, when all human help is hopeless and useless, and utterly fails, whether we are amongst the dead, or amongst the mourners, or whether (for it comes to that) we are only, after all, awaiting our turn when the silver cord is unloosed, and the golden bowl broken, if we face the question fairly, we shall find that the heart throws itself, and finds its only stay, and comfort, and consolation in the Love of God through hope, so "Charity hopeth all things." Even when our heart condemns us

for sin, it is hope that makes us long and look for, and if we are but penitent with a true heart-felt penitence and contrition for sin, and sorrowful confession, and hearty purpose of amendment, it is hope, I say, that makes us not only look for, but (on these conditions) be assured of forgiveness. "If our heart condemn us," says the Apostle of Love, the Apostle of Charity, S. John, "if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things," knows the reality and earnestness of our repentance, and forgives us, and restores us to His grace and favour, and reconciles us to Himself.

Charity, indeed, is the chiefest of all graces, the greatest of the Three Theological Virtues, as Faith stands first : but Hope is the link between the two others, and so S. Paul, from defining Faith, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, passes on at once to Hope. "Faith," he says, "is the substance of things hoped for." Charity is indeed the greatest, but it cannot exist without Faith and Hope. We cannot love God without believing in Him. We cannot really believe in God without loving Him. But we can neither believe in God, nor love Him, without trusting in Him, and hoping to be with Him for ever. For without Hope we are hopeless, that is, we fall into the greatest of all great sins, the sin of despair. And despair is the greatest of all sins, because it limits and distrusts the Love of God, and destroys our Faith in God, and renders us loveless, and faithless, and hopeless.

But let us pass on from ourselves to see how this great grace should be brought to bear on others. "Charity hopeth all things." When we bring these two theological or God-like virtues of Love and Hope to bear upon others, in proportion as they are deeply rooted and implanted in us, so will they bring forth fruit, and have their influence upon others. Half of the troubles and miseries and sorrows of this life come, I suppose, from our anxieties for others. Love, no doubt, lessens them, but not Love without Hope. Love makes us trustful, no doubt, but without Hope there is some element of buoyancy wanting in it. Charity and Hope together give us that unwavering trust in God, that we are sure that all things in all persons are working together for good. They make us almost believe, and in a certain sense we *may* believe, that even faults and failings in others may be made the very foundation for virtues and graces. Hope, too, cuts at the very root of slander and detraction. We cannot hope the best of a person, as we are bound by Charity to do, when we are thinking, or even speaking, the worst. If we have this "Charity," again, that "hopeth all things," we need never despair about correcting faults in those over whom we have charge. We need never gloomily forecast the future, knowing that we cannot tell what shall be on the morrow, nay, hoping that that morrow will bring forth good, knowing that it will bring forth what is best and most expedient for us and for others, because that morrow

is in the hands of a Loving Father, Whom we love, in Whom we trust. "Hope thou in the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall promote thee, that thou shalt possess the land." Hope also guards against discontent, as well as distrust. It accepts all ills that even, through others, God is pleased to send upon us, because of the "Hope that is set before us," which Hope we apply even to them. Hope sees through these ills and difficulties, sees beyond them, on to a bright and happy future : a future not of our own choosing and arranging, but one in which our delight will be perfectly to accept, and perfectly to do the Will of God in all things. So "Charity hopeth all things." So Love leaves all in Love in the hands of God with perfect submission, and humble resignation, and bright and cheerful acquiescence.

But Hope reaches back to the past as well as stretching forward to the future. It does so in the case of our dead in Christ. We hope everything that is bright and good for them. We dare not, and we ought not, to place a limit to that hope, even in cases which many might be, and also undoubtedly are, tempted to pronounce almost hopeless. Cases may occur to our mind, indeed, of what we call unrepentant deathbeds after a long and evil life. No doubt, if we were quite sure that the life had been long and evil, and the deathbed unrepentant, and both without redeeming points or extenuating circumstances, then, indeed, we might scarce dare to hope. But who

shall venture to judge his brother? No mere man hath made an agreement to God for him, so that, as the Psalmist says, he must "let that alone for ever." The dead are in the hands of a merciful Creator, Who knows, and alone knows, their good as well as their evil, and their evil as well as their good. Who alone is their Judge: a Judge both just and merciful. Who alone knows the secrets of the heart, and the strength of their temptations, and their lack of opportunities (which He has seen fit to order, and for which He will make allowance): so also for the dead, "Charity hopeth all things." "When the dead is at rest," says the wise man, "let his remembrance rest," *i.e.*, in remembering any evil against him, "and," he continues, "be comforted for him when his spirit is departed from him."

Yes, indeed! these twin graces and virtues of Charity and Hope cover and stretch over a vast field, reaching back through time, and reaching to eternity. For the living and for the dead, for ourselves and for others, for our own happiness (and for those we love better), here and hereafter, for our friends as for strangers, let us aim at cultivating this blessed spirit of that "Charity which hopeth all things." The Hope may be long deferred so so as to make the heart nigh sick, but still we must hope on. But to have a good Hope it must be a "holy Hope," joined to "fair Love;" it must rest, that is, on a religious life and a good conscience: for "the Hope of the ungodly

is like dust that is blown away with the wind, like a thin froth that is driven away with the storm : like as the smoke which is dispersed here and there with a tempest, and passeth away as the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but a day." An "ungodly life" is the Hope that is not "sure and steadfast." It is a Hope which is not Hope in its true sense, because it is not joined to Charity, or Love. It has no real future to look to. It is not joined to Faith, and, therefore, it is no true Hope. Those only, it is written, "who put their trust in God," that is, have this true theological virtue of Hope, "shall understand the truth : and such as be faithful shall abide in Love," or Charity : "for grace and mercy is to His Saints, and He hath care of His Elect."

SERMON XV.

Want of Perseverance.

I COR. XIII. 7, and part of 8.

“Charity endureth all things : Charity never faileth.”

LET us take a brief review of the several attributes of Charity, which S. Paul gives us in this Chapter, before we come to that which is the last on the long and beautiful list : and let us, at the same time, consider what sins are most opposite to these attributes, and, in a word, how they are antidotes to, or preventives of them.

First, we have the long-suffering and kindness, or, as we may read it, the *patience and gentleness* of Charity, as against the sins of *impatience*, and of an *ungentle* temper. “Charity suffereth long, and is kind.” Then, in the second place, we have the *contented* spirit of Charity : “Charity *envieth* not,” because Love rejoices in *all*, as coming from the God Who is not only Love, or Charity, but perfect Wisdom, and, therefore, there can be neither covetousness, nor envy, nor wishing for what we have not, or worse still, wishing for what another has, in the “Charity” that “*envieth* not.” Charity “*vaunteth* not

itself," because humility keeps even Love in its proper place. Humility must needs be *modest*, and runs no risks by rashness, above all, in vain and foolish talking and jesting, which are not, as the Apostle says, "convenient," that is, becoming or fitting ; it is never flippant or forward. It never tries to shew off, because it knows it must do so at the expense of, or at grievous harm to, another, and that in itself necessarily must be uncharitable. Nor, on the other hand, is Charity prudish, or unreal. It does not wrap itself up in itself, and so, by its undue and exaggerated efforts at self-restraint, become "puffed up." The humility of Love is real. Everything about God is real. Yea, let God be true, and every man a liar ! And, therefore, as God is Charity, so the nearer we approach to this Divine God-like attribute, so much the more real we become, so much the less hollow, and less inflated, puffed up, with a good opinion of ourselves. Let us remember there is nothing the great Enemy of our souls so loves as to see in us the "Pride which apes humility." For pride attacks us from many an unsuspected quarter. Nay, pride attacks us from quite opposite quarters if we are off our guard. Charity, again, is not greedy of admiration. It does not attract affection for the mere sake of attracting it. It keeps itself within bounds. Charity does not behave itself unseemly. Charity is seemly. It is attractive, but it is the seemliness of the order and beauty of God. It is honest and honourable. There is an

innate sense of proportion and decorum attached to Charity which never lets it behave unseemly. It puts due bounds to its thoughts, and, above all, to its words, and still more to its actions, that they are never unseemly, or unfitting, or out of order, or not consistent with the character of one whom God loves, and who loves God, and loves all in the light of God's Love.

Then, Charity is unselfish : she "seeketh not her own." No, for she seeks, and is ever seeking, the well-being of others. She is utterly forgetful of self, and of all consequences to herself. She walks so closely in the steps of the Lord of Love, Who was seeking, ever seeking, to save the lost : to save sinners, by giving up Himself, and losing, as it were, sight of Himself. She is ever willing to be passed over and forgotten, so only that others may really gain to their soul's profit. Selfishness is at the bottom of all our sins : so, necessarily, Charity, which is the greatest of all graces, the crown of all virtues, cuts at the very root of selfishness. Self-love is the exact opposite to Charity, or true Love, which is, to love God, and to love our neighbour as ourself : to act in his interests as we would for our own : to deny ourselves that we may help him : never to seek self in *thought*, as in self-complacency, or in *word*, needless talking of self, or in *deed*, or *action*, as in self-indulgence in its thousand forms.

Then, again, Charity is not "easily provoked." And for this reason, that true Love is always self-controlled,

because it is not selfish. True Charity lies too deep, absorbs too much of the Christian character, looks too clearly to its end, lives too much in the Love of God, to be easily ruffled, or provoked : that suits only a superficial character. And Charity is not superficial. It is often challenged, but it does not respond. If people *will* quarrel, it will have nothing to do with it. It determines that the quarrel should be always on one side. It gives the soft and gentle answer that turneth away, instead of increasing wrath. It answers not again, and thereby acquires not only the spirit of self-control, but of silence. To be easily provoked betrays a dangerous state of things in a man's mind. It shews a want of balance. It shews so much that is unsubdued and not brought into subjection to the Will, and to the Love of God.

And if Charity has its next characteristic, it is still less likely to be not only, not to be *easily* provoked, but not provoked at all, I mean the Charity which "thinketh no evil." There, indeed, *is* a grace to strive for. There *is* a sin to avoid. The grace of kindly judgment, even under unfavourable circumstances. The sin to avoid of a critical, censorious, unloving spirit, which is sure to lead to the greater sin of detraction, that is, not only of thinking, but of speaking evil, or even of rejoicing to be able to speak evil, so contrary to the next characteristic of that Charity which rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. Yes, again we are led a step onwards,

and higher still. Charity rejoices in the truth, however unpalatable, or however contrary to our feelings or prejudices it may be. Charity must needs, as I reminded you before, rejoice in the Truth, for God is Charity and God is Truth, therefore the House cannot be divided against itself. Charity, observe, necessarily inculcates a love of truth, and, therefore, of truthfulness. It shrinks from everything that is not absolutely true, fair, and honest, and of good report, because it rejoices not in iniquity, or injustice, but rejoices in the truth.

Then, again, Charity casts its mantle of Love over the failings of others. No doubt, the line is most difficult at times to know by which we should rule our conduct. "Charity beareth," that is, covers or conceals all things. And yet, in this very covering, or concealing, there appears to be an element of, or, at any rate, a dangerous tendency to, untruthfulness, or, at least, in not telling the truth, and the whole truth. To make a rule never needlessly to speak of the faults of others would be a great help in acquiring Charity. But the greater danger arises when it *is* needful to speak : and the difficulty is to distinguish between the time to be silent, and the time to speak. It seems that we are bound, even before we get to this stage, to endeavour to conceal any injury which affects our *own* interests, but not when it affects the interests of others. Charity may cover or bear all things which may injure us, but we have no right to injure the interests of others.

Charity, or Love, and Faith, must needs go together, so Charity must, of necessity, believe all things. It believes in all good of others. It believes that God, Who is Love, sends all in Love to us. It believes that all things work together for good to those who love God. It makes the best, and the very best, of everything. It hopes for the best, and so Charity "*hopeth all things.*" It goes beyond now, both past and present, and stretches out to the future. Charity is, indeed, the best of all remedies against such sins as discouragement, or despondency ; in other words, of losing hope : for this reason, that it "*hopeth all things.*" It places no limit to the Love of God. It triumphs over all appearances, or probabilities, and against hope itself believes in hope.

And now we come to the last two characteristics of Charity, and the last two are really one. They mean one and the same thing, for if Charity endureth all things, Charity can never fail : it must needs endure to the end. And so S. Paul concludes his great catalogue of the graces, or attributes, or characteristics of this greatest of all great gifts. Charity endureth all things. Charity never faileth, he says. But whether there be prophecies, *they* shall FAIL : whether there be tongues, *they* shall CEASE : whether there be knowledge, it shall *vanish away*. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. And then the Apostle concludes this

Chapter thus : " Now abideth," or remaineth, or endureth, " Faith, Hope, Charity, these three, but the greatest of these is Charity." Faith and Hope abide indeed, but Faith shall cease when it reaches its object, and Hope shall cease when it attains that it has hoped for, but Love alone shall never fail, but remain, or endure, or abide for ever. It shall triumph over every ill. Nothing shall separate it from the object of its love. For His sake it shall bear all things, and endure all things.

It shall never wax cold, but live on for ever, when this very earth of ours shall have crumbled away like dust. Then all that is true in Love shall be gathered up in that one great Love, which shall be made perfect, as it is absorbed in the Divine perfection, and shall radiate from that source of Love to all we love. Then, indeed, and for ever, and then only perfectly, shall we have true Charity and Love all in God, and God in all.

See, then, that nothing separates us from the Love of Christ ! Come what may, let us take heed to be closely joined and united to Him in living bonds of Love by a life of Sacramental Communion with Him. If any breach of sin come between us, let it be repaired by repentance, and contrition, and confession, and absolution, and full purpose and resolution of amendment. Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ ? asks the Apostle. Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or unkindness, or peril, or famine, or sword ? Nay, he adds, " in all these

things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Through Him Who loved me, and gave Himself, says S. Paul elsewhere. "For herein is Love, herein is Charity, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." In that Charity, in that Love, is included, not only all blessing, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."



